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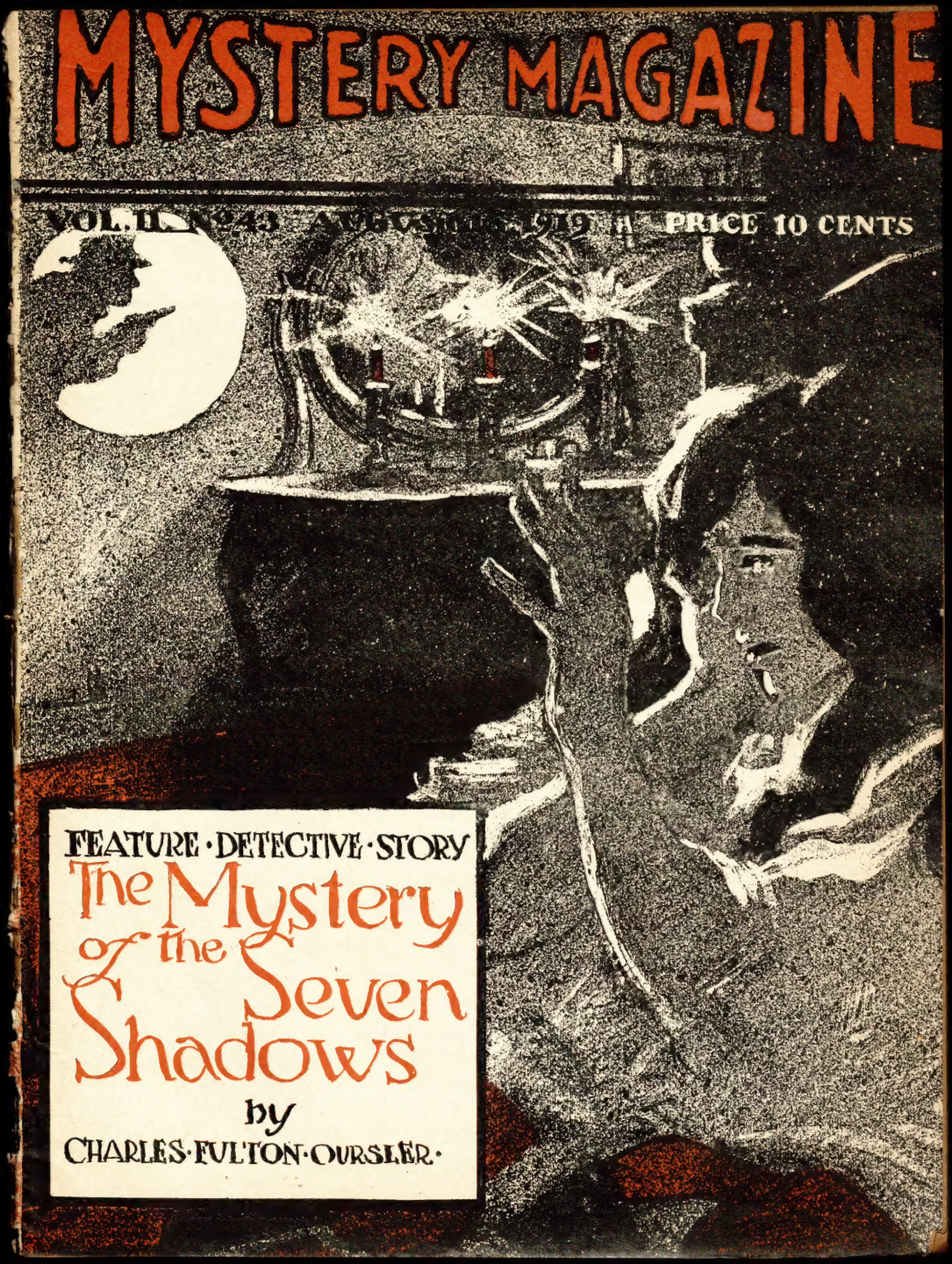

FEATURE · DETECTIVE · STORY

The Mystery of the Seven Shadows

by

CHARLES · FULTON · OURSLER ·

Watch for the Detective Story, "THE SIGN OF THE DRAGON," in Our Next Issue

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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THE MYSTERY OF THE SEVEN SHADOWS

A STRANGE DETECTIVE ROMANCE

By CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

CHAPTER ONE

CRIMSON CANDLES

A RAP sounded on the bed-room door of Gordon Keene.

"A gentleman and a young lady say they must see you at once, sir—a matter of life and death," said the voice of a man-servant.

Gordon Keene sat up in bed and his groping hand found the electric switch.

"Come in, Blake," he called, as the lights were flashed on. A young man, scantily dressed, opened the door and stood, half-awake, on the threshold.

"A young lady and a gentleman at this hour?" asked Keene, amazedly. "Why, look at the clock. It's three in the morning."

"They pounded on the door and rang the bell like to rouse the dead," answered Blake, ruefully. "The gentleman gave his name as Professor Rust. He said——"

Keene bounded from his bed excitedly.

"Show them into the library," he ordered. "Tell him I'll be right down. If Professor Rust comes here like this, he must have something—hurry up, Blake! Serve them some hot coffee and anything you can find in the pantry. Be quick!"

Blake was gone on the instant, and Gordon Keene busied himself with his garments. In less than ten minutes he was in a Tuxedo, as fresh as if about to attend an evening function, and walking down the stairs to meet his guests.

Professor Rust came forward eagerly to meet him.

"My dear Keene," he burst out, "it is beastly to break in on your sleep at such a ghastly hour—but this is a ghastly business, God knows, and if any man can help us, you can. Let me introduce Miss Marian Dale."

Keene bowed before as beautiful a girl as he had ever looked upon. She was a slender, brown-haired creature, with sympathetic eyes. What impressed him most was the death-like pallor of her face—the pinched expression that betokened an acute suffering, a mental anguish that was breaking her heart. The finger of horror had left an unmistakable mark upon a beautiful face.

"Won't you sit down, please?" said Keene, easily. "I do not mind the intrusion—particularly if I can serve you in trouble."

Marian Dale flashed a shy look of gratitude as she sank into a large chair. Professor Rust sat down abruptly, all eager to get at the business that had brought them there, but Keene, ignoring the over-strung tension which both of his guests exhibited, insisted that Blake serve them refreshments before they talked. He offered the professor a cigar, after receiving the permission of Miss Dale, and himself lighted a cigarette as he sank comfortably into an easy-chair.

"Now, professor," he said, smilingly, "tell me the story."

Professor Rust waved a sandwich tragically.

"It is the most damnable piece of business ever contrived," he cried, shrilly. "Either there is some fiendish occult agency at work to crush the life out of Miss Dale, here, or else there is some human fiend whose object is the same. Whatever the agency, the object is being achieved!"

"Please come to the point," prompted Keene.

Professor Rust paused a moment as if at a loss how to proceed. Gulping down a final bite of the sandwich, he resumed:

"I have been what you might call a guardian of Miss Dale here since her childhood, when she was left an orphan. That is to say, I supervised her education and in other ways looked after her. Consequently, although she has been of age these two years, it was to me she turned when this terrible thing began. I confess that——"

Gordon Keene was getting a trifle irritated at the impossibility of getting Professor Rust to come to the actual relation of the facts in the case.

"Tell me about that afterward," he interposed. "I am all eagerness to know the actual cause of this extraordinary visit."

"That you shall know," exclaimed the professor, dramatically. "The facts in the case are these: About two years ago Miss Dale was engaged to marry a certain young man, with whom she believed she was deeply in love. But you will understand that, as is the case with any young woman of independent means, she had many others who admired her. Finally she met another young man, and discovered that her first affair was a mistake, that her heart really belonged to another. She told her fiancé of that fact and asked to be released. He made no trouble, but"—and here the professor rose dramatically, while Marian dropped her head—"from that moment her trouble began.

"One evening, not long afterward, she had just said good-night to her future husband—Jack Eastwood—and was reading in her bed-room. Her maid had retired and she was quite alone. Marian, tell him what happened."

The girl lifted a haggard face, and shivering a little at the recollection, took up the thread of the narrative.

"All at once," she said, "I dropped my book, with the uncanny feeling that some one—or something—else was in the room with me. You know how one can feel things like that, Mr. Keene. I glanced hurriedly behind me, but there was no one there. I got up and tried the door, but it was locked, as I had left it. Then I turned, and what I saw above my mirror nearly made me faint. There was a round circle of light in the very center of the wall—a circle of white, brilliant light. I could not imagine where it was coming from, and it looked so fearful and so strange that I felt sure it was something ghostlike. I watched it, very frightened, and then across it there suddenly appeared a shadow.

"Mr. Keene, that shadow was uncanny. I did not stir. It was the figure of a little dog, and it stood on its hind legs, and held out its paws and begged. All at once the light went out—the light and the shadow were gone."

A hush fell on the three of them there, and Gordon Keene smoked in earnest silence, waiting for the girl to resume.

"I had a little dog as a household pet, Mr. Keene," she continued. "He used to beg just like that shadow did. The very next day it died!"

Professor Rust again leaped to his feet.

"A little thing, Mr. Keene, but an evil omen just the same, and in the light of what has followed, a damnable evil thing. That is why we are here to-night. You have a reputation as an unraveler of mysteries. You are more than a detective—you are a master scientist. And if this thing can be explained, then you——"

Gordon Keene interrupted him with a gesture.

"Go on, Miss Dale," he urged. "I am tremendously interested."

"I told my friends of this experience," she said, "and they laughed at me. They all insisted I had dozed over my book and had dreamed this thing. But I was sure I had not, until their repeated arguments convinced me, and I believed at last they were right. Then——" Her voice broke, and it was several moments before she could go on. "Then I saw a second shadow, and under the most extraordinary circumstances. It was in the same room and about the same hour. I was in bed, almost asleep, and the room was dark. Suddenly the room was lighted, not by the electric lights, but by three small jets of flame. They were from three blood-red candles on my dresser, and they seemed to have been lighted by an invisible hand. The candles had not been there when I went to sleep.

"I was too horror-stricken to cry out. All that I could do was to lie there, petrified, frozen with fear, and watch. The three crimson candles cast a glow over the wall, and almost instantly a shadow appeared there. This time it was not the harmless form of a terrier. It was now a miniature silhouette of a highwayman, with a revolver held out. The apparition—if you could call a shadow two feet high such a thing—was fixed and still. It remained there for a few moments and then something snuffed those candles. They went out all at once. In the darkness I found my voice and screamed so that I aroused the neighborhood. My maid rushed from her bed, and others in the apartment hurried in. When they got to me, I was in hysterics, and babbled incoherently about the shadow. When they had finally quieted me, however, I would not speak. I dared not tell them what I had seen; I feared they would call me mad. So I hugged the dreadful secret to my breast; told them I had simply had a bad dream, and asked only that Annette, the maid, remain with me for the rest of the night.

"The next day, as I was coming through Central Park, just about dusk, a man leaped out of the bushes, and sprang upon me. He attacked me like a raging maniac. His one purpose seemed to be to beat me; his fists struck repeated blows on my face, my breast, all over my body. I lost consciousness before he had left me."

Sobbing at the memory, Marian could not go on. Professor Rust was about to orate again, but Gordon Keene hastily prevented him. The detective's eyes were glit-

tering with intense interest at Marian Dale's story. Gently he soothed her, and asked her to continue.

"I lay in the hospital two months following that," she went on. "My body was a mass of bruises and cuts as a result of that brutal assault. Two days ago I came out of the hospital and returned to my apartment. While in the hospital, I had told one of the physicians my story, and he had promptly summoned a psychiatrist to examine my mental condition. He thought I was mad. I resolved then and there never to tell it again to any one, not even to so kind and generous a friend as Professor Rust. But what I saw to-night banished that resolution. I am afraid.

"My maid had just left the room, about eleven o'clock this evening, when I saw the third shadow. This time there were no red candles, no white circle of light on the mirror. There was simply a shape crawling across my wall—a shadow shape, a black, coiling shadow—the apparition of a giant snake!"

Shuddering and sobbing, the girl rushed over to the side of Professor Rust, who soothed her with an awkward tenderness that was pathetic.

Gordon Keene paced the floor excitedly. No man loved mystery better than he; certainly none had ever encountered and solved deeper enigmas in his day and generation. Here was a challenge to all his theories and all his resources—a problem the like of which he had never heard before.

"To-night you saw the shadow of a snake!" he commented. "And nothing has happened?"

"Nothing has happened—yet!" said Professor Rust, significantly.

Keene was silent for a moment, his brows knitted, his fingers working nervously up and down his cheeks—a favorite attitude when he was puzzled.

"It is too grotesque, too utterly unheard of," he argued, more to himself than to his guests. "I gather that when Miss Dale saw this third shadow—the form of a snake writhing across her bed-room wall—she decided to go to you at once and tell her story?"

"Exactly," answered the old scholar. "She came to me almost at midnight and laid the facts before me. More sophisticated men, Mr. Keene, might have laughed at her, but not I. You may regard me as an old fossil, studying my Greek and my logic, but I believe what she tells me is true. And not being anything more than an old fossil, I brought her to the one man I knew could help her, the man who——"

"Miss Dale," interrupted Keene, hopefully, "you have told us a baffling story, it is true, but not necessarily one impossible to solve. There is nothing psychic or ghost-like in what you have seen, of that I would swear. But what it really is, that is what we must find out. This snake thing, now—perhaps we can catch it in time. You did well to act so promptly. Perhaps we may——"

A piercing scream from Marian startled the two men. She rose, rigid with horror, and pointed at a corner of the room.

Coiled in undulating, shivering circles, was a huge green snake, spitting with rage and ready to spring. And no one knew how it got there.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FOURTH SHADOW

"DON'T move!" said Keene.

His voice was low and tense, but there was a ring of confidence, of authority, of stern command which had its effect. The panic-stricken Professor Rust sat, pale and staring, like a frozen image of fear, on the edge of his chair. Marian, her finger still pointed in loathing terror at the reptile, remained half crouched, her breath coming in gasps. Keene remained transfixed in the center of the room, his eyes on the snake, completing the tableau.

It was a monster reptile, a cobra, with sleepy, wicked eyes, and its sickening odor filled the room. Its body, in its thick coils, trembled; its forked tongue moved in lightning darts; its flat head was drawn back. The yellow spots that marked its greenish black coat gave it a sinister, devilish appearance—an evil thing of power. It was poised for a spring, and its ugly eyes were on Marian Dale.

"Don't move!" crooned Gordon Keene.

A flash of hope came to Professor Rust. Keene had been in India; Keene knew about everything; perhaps he could charm the reptile. He waited to see if the detective would make any move to fascinate the creature and render it harmless by some occult means. But such was not the intention of the detective. Second after second ticked away, and not one of the three moved a muscle. The reptile made a sudden, hissing noise and a long, lithe movement of its neck.

"Now!" said Keene.

Out of the shadows of the book-case draperies darted a long riding whip, looped at the end. With a swish it came down over the squirming neck of the hissing snake; the arm that held the whip twisted the loop with sudden ferocity, and pushed it downward.

With a bound Gordon Keene leaped across the room, snatching an ancient sword that hung on the wall, and bringing it down with a merciless blow on the head of the snake. Again and again he struck, and then stepped back with a smile and a chuckle that were his only outward signs when danger and crisis were over.

"Who—who did that?" croaked Professor Rust.

"Yes—who?" breathed Marian earnestly.

Keene smiled, a little whimsically.

"A man who monkeys with crime and criminals," he replied, "must be forever on the alert against his enemies and the enemies of his clients. If not"—he made a significant movement across his throat—"he will soon cease to figure as a detective. Consequently a detective must not depend entirely upon his own resources in matching wits against evil-doers." He turned and faced the draped book-case at the end of the library. "You may come out now," he called.

And out of the draperies, erect and unmoved, stepped Blake. The young man's face was as calm and inscrutable as if nothing whatever had occurred.

"Blake," explained Keene smilingly, "is more than an attendant. For two years he has been my companion, more my comrade, in a hundred devilish adventures, and more than once he has saved my life. He is brave, faithful and sometimes infernally stupid. You can never tell where he is—he is likely to turn up most any place, for he is always on the job. To-night, one of us at least owes him life itself."

Marian went up to the blushing Blake and put her hands on his shoulders in unaffected gratitude. She began to tell him, almost incoherently, how much she owed to his presence of mind, but he grew so confused that Keene kindly interfered, and sent him away. As the door closed behind him the detective confronted his two clients soberly.

"The situation," he said, "is not materially altered by this thing," and he kicked the carcass of the snake angrily. "It does confirm my opinion, however, that we are dealing with a human and not a supernatural agency. Perhaps this dead monster will provide us the clue that we shall

need. In any event, it will not do to discuss the matter any further here at this time. I feel quite certain, Miss Dale, that you will not suffer any more annoyances tonight, and I shall see that you are protected to the limit. If you will not object, I shall arouse my housekeeper, Mrs. Stone, who lives here with me—oh, she will be delighted, I assure you—and you shall pass the night with her. I think it would be a grave mistake for you to go out from here at such an hour. Professor Rust can call for you in the morning, and in the meantime I shall spend the two hours that intervene between now and dawn to working on this problem, and I hope to be able to tell you something definite at breakfast. Is that agreeable?"

Professor Rust thought it an excellent idea, and Marian was delighted to know that she should end the night in such protected surroundings. Accordingly, Keene left them in the library and soon had summoned Mrs. Stone, a sweet, peaceful-faced elderly woman, who came down at once, and immediately went up to Marian, put her arms around her, and led her away.

Left alone, with the carcass of the snake between them, Keene and Professor Rust faced each other with blank faces. The old professor was plainly out of his element; hopelessly confused and very much over-wrought. Keene was obsessed with the baffling mystery with which he had been so suddenly confronted, and rather anxious for the professor to say good-night and get out. He liked to work in silence, with no one near but the faithful Blake.

"What do you make of it?" barked the professor.

"Nothing!" snapped Keene. "Professor, I want you to say 'good-night' and go, so that I can work this thing out without delay. You won't mind?"

"Not at all! Not at all!"

The professor picked up his hat and a traveling bag, and reluctantly started for the door.

"Just a moment!" called Keene. "A question about your ward. She is wealthy?"

"Worth about half a million! Manages it herself, too. I turned the whole thing over to her when she came of age."

"Who does the money go to afterward?"

The professor looked meaningly at the detective for a moment, sat down his bag, and came closer.

"She has just made a new will," he whispered, hoarsely. "Left it all to Jack Eastwood!"

"What! To her fiancé?"

"Exactly. I was one of the witnesses."

"But she hasn't married him yet!"

"Exactly!"

"What became of that man she turned down for Eastwood?"

"I don't know. He disappeared. But I have always believed——"

"You knew her mother?"

The question evidently struck home to the old professor. He dropped his eyes, and then answered slowly:

"I was once a suitor of her mother, but she married another man. She lived to repent of it, Keene. She died almost the day Marian was born, and with her dying breath she asked that I be her guardian."

"What do you think of this Jack Eastwood?"

"Bah!" cried the professor.

"Good-night, professor."

"Good-night, Keene. Take good care of Marian."

The door shut softly behind the old man, and Keene heard his footsteps down the hallway; heard the front door slam, and the sound of the automobile outside as it carried him away. As the last faint chugging of the motor came to his ears, the curtains of the book-case were parted again, and Blake came forth. He was as inscrutable as ever, and stood like a soldier at attention, waiting for his orders.

"Go upstairs," ordered Keene, "and tell Mrs. Stone I want Miss Dale's outer garments sent to me at once."

Blake disappeared through the doorway. Keene paused uncertainly in the center of the room for a moment, then stalked to the corner where the snake had first made its appearance. He examined the floor minutely, getting down on his knees, and peering at the boarding in the floor, lifting the thick Persian rug every now and then, and examining the most insignificant details of the woodwork.

"How in the devil!" he muttered to himself.

Still on his knees, he crawled back and forth across the floor, until at last he knelt beside the vile-smelling length of the reptile. Starting at its head, he examined the carcass with the most circumstantial care, every once in a while rubbing a tentative finger against its oily green coat and yellow spots. His brows were drawn close together, his forehead was furrowed, and every now and then he grunted in a way that Blake would have interpreted as extreme annoyance at finding no clues.

"There is no such thing as the fourth dimension of space," he said as he stood upright. "There was a physical way in which that snake crawled into this room, and by thunder I've got to find it!"

The door opened and Blake came in, bearing in his arms the brown skirt and coat, the white silk waist which Marian Dale had worn. With an air of profound gravity he deposited these in the chair so lately occupied by Professor Rust, and then stood back to await further orders.

"Did you notice anything peculiar about those garments?" asked Keene, casually, as he lifted the coat and held it to the light.

"They have a peculiar perfume that I don't quite understand," answered Blake.

"You noticed that?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Go into the laboratory, Blake, and bring me one of those small garden snakes that I have been using for the back-pressure experiments. Try to get a young one."

Again Blake vanished through the doorway.

Keene took the coat and placed it behind the draperies of the book-case, and on top of them he laid the skirt and waist. This done, he drew the curtains tight, and walked to the other side of the room, just as Blake opened the door, with a small green serpent dangling by the tail from his fingers.

"Put it on the floor," commanded Keene.

Blake obeyed, and the thin little snake lay quite still for a moment, except for the nervous wriggling of its tail. Suddenly it lifted its head a trifle and then began worming its way rapidly across the carpet. It was making straight for the book-case curtains. In an incredibly short time it had reached its goal and passed beneath the hangings.

Keene, followed by Blake, hurried across the room and drew back the curtains. The snake had coiled itself contentedly against the brown coat of Marian Dale.

"I was positive of it," said Keene. "That coat has been perfumed with thorn root, an East Indian herb, and a sure attraction for any kind of snake. A cruel coward, this devil we've got to find, Blake. He wanted to make sure of his victim this time, so he daubed thorn root over her clothing to attract that monster. Well—carry out that carcass now, and take the little snake with you. We've learned that much, anyhow. The snake placed in waiting outside, followed her in here, attracted by that odor."

Lighting another cigarette, Keene threw himself into the depths of an easy-chair, while Blake, without a grunt of protest, proceeded to drag away the corpse of the cobra. The detective quickly forgot his surroundings as he began to marshal the facts of the case before him in orderly array, seeking to find a common denominator for them all. In this, Keene adopted a method not practiced by any other detective he had ever known. Instead of piecing fact upon fact together, he visualized pictures of different objects associated with a crime. He would close his eyes and his imagination would bring up before his mental vision such pictures as would enable him intuitively to reach out and snatch an explanation, where logic would not have helped. Keene was not a logician. He was a scientist with imagination, who, once he knew what course to pursue, could bring surprising results forth by using unsuspected secrets of his laboratory. But he arrived at that proper course more by inspiration from his mental pictures than by theorems, hypotheses and logical thinking.

As he closed his eyes now, a strange array of objects were presented to his mind. He saw a beveled mirror, above which a white light glowed, and in the center of that white light he saw the shadow of a dog. Next he saw a set of three red candles, lighted by an unseen hand. Then he pictured the second shadow—the grotesque silhouette of a highwayman. What an odd business, anyhow! And then the third shadow—the writhing image of a serpent across the quiet bed-room wall of a girl's boudoir—and then the green, loathsome, yellow-spotted thing which had come, as if from nowhere, in the privacy of his own library.

"What devilish brain is behind these things?" he asked himself, and with an uncomfortable feeling that he had not enough clues to work on, he got up and paced excitedly up and down the room. Already he was mapping out what he would do when daylight came. He would visit Miss Dale's rooms, he would interview Annette, the maid; he would find out by what fiendish contrivance those shadows were produced.

That was it! If he could find out how those ghastly shadows were thrown, and actually trace out their origin, he felt the rest would be simple. He was certain the simple knowledge of that fact would lead him inevitably to the guilty man. And if he could only see the actual shadow itself! Give him that opportunity and he would guarantee to put the man responsible for the business behind the bars or in a mad-house.

As if fate had heard and taken up his challenge, the buzzer of the interior telephone sounded harshly, hurriedly, excitedly. Keene lifted the receiver and asked what was wanted.

"Mr. Keene, come up here quick—quick, for God's sake!" came the voice of Mrs. Stone, his housekeeper.

Keene rushed out in the corridor and went up the steps like lightning. In time almost less than it takes to describe, he was at the door. It was opened, and the two women, pale and trembling, were waiting for him on the threshold.

"Mr. Keene, go in there, but be careful," begged the trembling Mrs. Stone. "Look at the wall, just over the mantel!"

His jaws set, his eyes burning with excitement, Keene strode into the room. Instantly he saw what had terrified them.

There was a round circle of brilliant white light on the wall, and in the center of it the shadow of a human hand. The hand was clasping a dagger, and there were drops falling from its point. The hand seemed as if about to lunge at something, and then the light and the shadow went out like the snuffing of a candle—the wall was bare and empty.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT THE SHADOW FORETOLD

GORDON KEENE slowly studied the room.

"Stay where you are," he told the two women, and, without stirring from his position, he looked about him. Certainly there was no one else in the room; certainly, in its simple elegance of appointments, it offered no place for concealment. And in his own heart Keene was sure there was no hidden apparatus there to produce the shadow he had witnessed; there was some deeper meaning to it all. Yet he had seen the thing; watched it with his own trained eyes, had beheld it melt away and vanish into nothingness. It was ghostly.

He went up to the spot on the wall where the shadow had been and ran his hand over the wainscoting. All was solid and intact; he put his nose close to it and sniffed—there was no faint trace of chemical there to show that the wall had been daubed with any secret preparation. Keene had thought of that theory when the story had first been told him; of some possible chemical combination which, itself invisible, might produce some such effect under the rays of artificial light. But the shadow had not flickered! He had seen that lunging hand, with its dripping dagger clutched, across the mysterious circle of light.

He faced the two women again.

"There is no use in deceiving ourselves," he said, calmly. "Whoever or whatever it is that is following you, Miss Dale, has succeeded in penetrating my own house, and it seems you are not altogether safe, even here. But I shall see to it that you are safe. Blake!"

A figure separated itself from the shadows at the rear of the hallway, just outside the bed-room door. It was Blake, the ever-watchful, ever-silent assistant, ready at once for his orders.

"Take these ladies to my laboratory," ordered Keene, crisply. "Make them as comfortable as you can there, but under no circumstances leave them alone for an instant. Be ready for whatever may happen—and shout if anything does happen!"

"Why can't we stay here with you and pass the night awake?" pleaded Mrs. Stone, anxiously. Her entreaty was seconded by an eager look from Marian Dale, who was too downcast to speak.

"Impossible!" declared Keene. "This fiend has carried his work inside my own dwelling. There is something sinister abroad in the black hours of this morning, and delay would be dangerous. I have lost too much time already. Good-night!"

Without further words, the two women followed Blake down the broad staircase, and Keene was left alone in the boudoir. In the last ten minutes his manner had changed completely. The sudden appearance of the snake in his library was still to be explained, but there were a dozen different normal means by which its entrance might be accounted for. The shadow which he had seen was different. It transcended anything in his experience. It was so far utterly inexplicable.

With folded arms, the puzzled detective stood long and silently, his thoughts busy upon the problem. That the danger was not past he felt certain. The ugly threat of the dripping dagger assumed a terrible significance in the light of those former omens—first the shadow of a dead dog, then a dog actually dead; the shadow of a highwayman, then a brutal attack; the shadow of a snake,

and then a hissing cobra, ready to strike. What new blow was portended now? Where would it strike? Keene raged within, as the problem still eluded him; quick action was what was wanted, and he could not act.

"More facts!" he whispered to himself. "I must get more facts. And before I get them there may be——"

He bit his lips in vexation. It seemed as if his mind would not function. He closed his eyes, and the shadow of the hand clutching the dagger leaped before his imagination. Even the vision of it startled him. It persisted; it would not be gone. And then the idea he had longed for came.

At first he rejected it as being absurd and beneath his notice. Then he argued with himself about it, and at last admitted inwardly that it was worth the trial. Inasmuch as at this stage of the game he was so hopelessly baffled that he knew not which way to turn, and this was the only course presented to his mind, his decision to follow it up was only a bit of common sense.

Switching off the lights, he went downstairs and rapped on the laboratory door. Immediately it was opened by the housekeeper. Miss Dale was resting comfortably in a wicker chair, requisitioned from the reception hall, and Mrs. Stone had taken possession of the chair in front of the table where Dale conducted his chemical experiments.

"Where do you keep your lights on when you are preparing to retire?" he asked Mrs. Stone. "Do you always have them as they were to-night, or sometimes do you have some of them off?"

"I always have all the lights on until I am ready to get into bed," she replied.

"Thanks. I hope you are feeling more comfortable—anyway, don't worry! I think I begin to see a way out of this!"

With that the detective turned and was about to retrace his steps across the hallway to the library when he was halted by the sudden feeling—a quick impression—that some one was near him. It was a subtle warning to his soul that hidden somewhere out of sight in that corridor was another human being—an enemy. He stopped dead-short.

The house was as silent as a graveyard. Behind the laboratory door the two women were too weary, too frightened to speak, except in occasional under-tones. Blake, who kept them company, never spoke except when spoken to. Death-like the stillness seemed, and pregnant with hidden danger.

Was the thing getting on his nerves? Through Keene's mind the question flashed, but something within him answered no! There was unmistakable prompting in his heart; he was in deadly peril at that moment.

And then the peril was revealed. Around the corner of the corridor came a hand—a human hand, wearing a black glove, and its fingers clutched a dagger from which red drops were falling. Only the hand and the forearm were revealed—the rest of the body was hidden behind the curve of the wall.

The hand moved upward with a slow, deliberate motion. It reached a proper angle and then lunged forward with frightful force and swiftness. The dagger came circling in a sudden rush and buried itself into the splintering wood of the balustrade—barely more than an inch from Gordon Keene.

With an oath, Keene leaped forward, just as the hand was drawn back. Whoever the intruder was, he could not escape him now, for he was standing in a niche in the wall, where every possible means of escape, except precipitate flight in full view, was cut off.

Keene had no weapons but his bare hands, but he could have grappled with a troupe of demons, in the rage that now flamed in his heart. With all his strength he hurled himself around the bend of the wall and into that corner; caution and watchfulness he threw aside, to be at the creature who was now so near.

His head knocked against the plastering; his arms blundered wildly against the wall; his hands groped the air in vain. Like the prophetic shadows that haunted Marian Dale, the man whose hand Gordon Keene had just seen, whose dagger still quivered in the woodwork of the corridor stairs, had disappeared.

Keene rushed into the library. He threw aside the furniture in a mad rush up and down the room; he overturned a couch, tore down the hangings of the book-case, and then dashed to the front door, only to discover that the bolts were firm, and that the lock was unyielding.

Keene almost staggered back down the corridor. His brain was reeling at the demoniacal power which seemed to be pitted against him. Give him the carefully plotted bedevilments of human criminals and he would stake his reputation that he could untangle the clues. But what could he, or any man, do against the resources of shadows that came and went; of men who themselves could disappear at will?

Without an effort he managed to dislodge the knife from its position. Evidently the man who had thrown it was not possessed of considerable muscular force, for the point of the blade was not deeply imbedded in the wood. Holding the weapon gingerly by the handle, Keene carried it into the library and placed it on the table.

It was a surpassingly handsome thing, that dagger. Its blade was cut into a dozen sharpened facets, and glittered brilliantly. The handle was of yellowed ivory, carved so that a man's fingers could clasp it most conveniently, and there was a single red stone, a ruby of the genuine pigeon-blood hue, set in the center. The workmanship showed it to be the work of some master craftsman—probably a Dutchman of the fourteenth century. These details Keene observed, but without particular interest. What he did notice, with absorbed attention, was the corroded appearance of the very tip of the blade. It seemed to have recently been dipped in some acid which had eaten much of it away.

"I wonder——" he said, slowly, and then paused. He remembered the scarlet drops he had seen dripping from its point. His hesitation was only momentary; he hurried down the hallway and opened the laboratory door.

"I am sorry to disturb you ladies again," he apologized, and neither his face nor his manner gave them any hint of the extraordinary incident he had just passed through in the corridor, "but I find I need something else if I am to find out the truth of this affair."

He passed over to a box-like cage in the rear of the room and presently emerged with a squirming white rabbit in his hand.

"Mr. Keene, what are you going to do with that poor little thing?" asked Marian.

But Keene put his finger mysteriously to his lips, and passed out of the laboratory. He watched cautiously as he moved down the corridor, for he felt certain the hidden enemy had other weapons besides his dagger. But the detective reached the library safely, and having closed the door, he placed the rabbit on the table, where he held him firmly.

"Bunny," he said, "I'm sorry to sacrifice you like this, but it's on the altar of a sacred cause, and your reaction now to this experiment may save the lives of your superiors."

Seizing the dagger, he pricked the tender skin of the

rabbit on one side, as gently as he could, so gently in fact that the little fellow barely winced at the miniature operation. But a moment later it seemed suddenly galvanized; its body grew rigid, and then relaxed into a pitiful little heap. It was dead.

"A poison dagger!" muttered Keene beneath his breath. "And this time it was meant for me. Lord, what an——"

He stopped, listening intently. The floors of his house were carpeted with the handwork of Asia, yet he had heard a footstep; the sound of some one moving cautiously, so very slowly, just outside the library door.

Keene's hand noiselessly felt for the drawer of the library table, while his eyes never left the door. Soon his hands closed over the butt of a revolver, and with this leveled before him, he began stealthily moving toward the door. The footsteps had ceased, all sound had seemed to come to an end in the frightful tension of these minutes. Keene knew the man was there, and he knew—he was certain—that a real clash was at hand.

Still no sound came from the doorway. Keene, creeping noiselessly forward, wondered if it were a trap—if the hidden foe might not be decoying him into the death which he had so narrowly escaped from the dagger. It made him cautious, but it did not deter him.

His hands reached forward and seized the knob. With a terrific pull he hurled the door backward and leveled his revolver through the doorway.

"Hands up!" he cried.

He had covered a stalwart man, whose rather youthful face was gone suddenly white, and whose eyes were blinking in fear and amazement.

"Put down that gun," cried the stranger.

"You are under arrest," snapped Keene, cool and serene. "The charges are burglary, attempted murder and several other things. I shall hand you over to the police in a moment."

The stranger smiled a little weakly.

"There's a mistake somewhere," he protested. "This is —er—an important call."

"A call?" mocked Keene. "A friendly call at five o'clock in the morning, when a man's house is locked up?"

"Not to see you," insisted the man, with a dazed and bewildered air. "I came to see Mar—Miss Marian Dale!"

"So I understand," retorted Keene, sarcastically. "Do you mind giving me your name?"

"Certainly not," the man replied. "My name is Jack Eastwood."

CHAPTER FOUR

WHO'S GUILTY NOW?

THAT was the last name Keene ever had dreamed would come from the intruder's lips. And the man said it with the utmost frankness and sincerity, as if that very remark should explain matters without much additional comment.

"Eastwood!" exclaimed Keene. "I understand that you are a very good friend of Miss Marian Dale?"

"That's why I am here."

"Indeed?"

Keene's voice was cutting. Eastwood's assurance had returned to him, and there was something akin to insolence, almost a threat, in fact, in his manner.

"Yes. That is why I am here. And if I am not conducted to Miss Dale at once, there is quite likely to be a little trouble. You see, my dear Mr. Whoever you are, I am not much concerned at that loaded gun in your hand —I've met them before."

It occurred to Keene that he was having quite a remarkable time of it. Far from evincing any fear at being detected prowling around the house under suspicious circumstances at such an hour, Eastwood was making himself the aggressor, actually threatening to make trouble.

"You seem to forget," snapped the detective. "You are a burglar in my house, and my prisoner. I think you know what you are guilty of. And if you start any monkey business, I'll shoot—straight."

Eastwood looked frankly puzzled. He stared hard at Keene for a moment, and then smiled in a manner intended to be friendly and capitulating.

"Perhaps we are talking at cross purposes," he hazarded. "I'm not a burglar, and I don't know what all your mysterious accusations mean. I was in bed, asleep, in my apartment, an hour ago. My telephone rang. Some one—it was a harsh, low voice, more like a boy's than a man's—told me to come here at once—that Miss Dale had been kidnapped here in an automobile, and that she was in terrible danger. Whoever it was told me your basement door would be left open by a friend. Now you will understand I didn't know what to believe; whether it was some impossible practical joke or not. But no man would take a chance on a message like that. I jumped into my clothes and came here in a taxicab. The door was open downstairs when I got here, but no one was waiting for me. I came right in, and all at once you jumped at me with that revolver. That's what I am doing here!"

Keene smiled skeptically.

"It doesn't listen good, Eastwood," he replied. "Not in the light of what has been going on here in the last few hours. Suppose you come in and sit down. I'll have to figure what to do with you."

"Not on your life," snarled Eastwood. "I'm going to find out if there's anything in that message now. I'm going to look for Marian Dale."

He clenched his fists and was about to rush upon Keene. But the latter's face was grimly set, and the weapon leveled directly at Eastwood's head.

"Miss Dale is here," the detective assured him. "She came here, voluntarily, to be under my protection. If I think it wise I may even allow you to see her. Meanwhile sit down."

His face flushed, his manner nervous, Eastwood sat down unwillingly, while Keene still covered him with the revolver. Without relaxing this precaution, the detective backed to the house telephone, plugged the proper connection and pushed the button for the laboratory. Then, with his free hand he lifted the receiver to his ear.

"That you, Blake?" he asked. "Did you lock up the house to-night? You did. At what time? Nine o'clock? Do you remember locking the basement door? You do? Thanks."

As he dropped the receiver, the detective once more addressed Eastwood.

"Where is your apartment, Mr. Eastwood?"

"96 West Kenwood Avenue."

"Your telephone number?"

"Claxton 1077."

Keene picked up the receiver of the exterior phone and gave the number Eastwood had just told him. In a few moments he had the apartment-house operator on the line.

"Is Mr. Eastwood in his apartment?" he asked, smiling grimly at the indignant glance of his prisoner.

"No, sir," came the telephone girl's reply. "He left here in a taxicab about an hour ago."

"Do you know where he went?"

"No, sir. He got a telephone call, and the party told me at the time to get him quick—it was a rush message. Five minutes afterward Mr. Eastwood came rushing downstairs and called a taxi. There's an all-night stand near here, you see, because of the——"

Keene dropped the receiver. That much of Eastwood's story at least was verified. The situation was far from reassuring. Certainly Eastwood's story was most improbable, and yet—— Another idea came to the detective. Picking up the telephone again, he asked for the chief operator.

"I am investigating a burglary in my house," he told her. "This is Green 7666. I wish you would let me know if any telephone call has been made from my house within the last hour and a half—with the single exception of one I have just made, two minutes ago."

"Just a moment," was the response. There was an interval of waiting, and then the chief operator's voice came droningly to the detective's ear:

"Some one called Claxton 1077 a little over an hour ago. They told the operator it was a rush message—to hurry. Can I help you any further?"

"No. Thanks."

Keene dropped the receiver and faced Jack Eastwood, replacing his revolver on the library table as he did so.

"Eastwood," he said, "whether you're a criminal or an honest man I'm not prepared to say, but you've told me the truth so far. Your presence here is damned suspicious—if you are innocent you don't know how prejudiced your position is. But I'm going to give you the chance to prove your innocence, principally for the sake of the girl in there, who loves you. Right from the start you may as well understand that she has been in deadly danger, and I believe she still is. If you are sincere you will do everything in your power to save her. And I can tell you what to do."

All the traces of resentment were gone from Eastwood's face. His eyes were anxious as he thrust out his hand and Keene clasped hands with him.

"I'll do anything at all," said Eastwood, huskily. "What shall I do first?"

Keene did not immediately reply. He was studying Eastwood's hand—a most unusual hand it was for a man. It was long and well groomed, the fingers were supple, and the flesh soft. An artist might have had such a hand, or a psychic, or a poet, or even——

"What do you do for a living?" asked Keene, abruptly.

"I'm a salesman," answered Eastwood. And then, with a flush of understanding, he glanced down. "You're looking at my hands. I play the violin, and that naturally has made me be careful with them. To get the *vibrato*, you know, one must have the proper sensitiveness as well as strength. I have developed them for years, and the best practice I have found to be shadowgraphy."

"What do you mean?"

Keene's voice was casual—there was a silken nonchalance in his words that cloaked a sudden and tremendous shock.

"Shadow pictures. You know how. By manipulating the hands—particularly the fingers—one can make shadow pictures on the wall. I am quite an expert at it."

Was the man a babbling lunatic? Didn't he know—hadn't Marian Dale told him of those early shadows—those sinister forerunners of what she was suffering now? Keene studied the man before him incredulously. Yet Eastwood met his gaze frankly, as if he had nothing whatever to conceal.

"So you make shadow pictures," remarked Keene. "You can double and twist your fingers to produce small silhouettes on the wall?"

"Surely. But I don't quite see—haven't we more important things to talk about?"

"You can imitate the shadow of a dog?" Keene's voice was edged now.

"Why, yes, I can."

"Could you make the silhouette of a highwayman?"

Eastwood regarded the detective coldly.

"Just what is your drift?" he inquired.

"Could you do what I asked?" repeated Keene.

A shot rang out, and something whizzed between them. A flood of smoke came through the doorway, the glass of a picture crashed into a rain of fragments, and they heard the sound of rending wood as a bullet tore its way through the wainscoting.

Both sprang to their feet. The shot had come from the hallway. With one accord both rushed out, but as Keene knew in his heart before he got there, the hallway was empty. At the same moment the laboratory door was flung open and Mrs. Stone, followed by Marian Dale, came impetuously down the corridor.

"What is it? What has happened?" they cried.

Then Marian Dale screamed: "Jack! Are you hurt? What are you doing here?" She rushed into Eastwood's arms and laid her sobbing head against his breast. Mrs. Stone, white-faced and unnerved, looked questioningly at the detective. Blake stood alert and expectant in the background.

"It is nothing," Keene assured them, his voice pitched high and confident. "Our man got away again—that's all. Next time we'll get him. I called Mr. Eastwood here because I thought he might be of some help. I am sure you don't mind, Miss Dale?"

Marian's answer was to wrap her arms tighter around Eastwood's neck and cry out her troubles. It was up to Keene to break the tableau.

"I think it will be best for you ladies to remain in the laboratory, as I instructed you," he said, sharply. "You should not have raced out here as soon as you heard that shot—no one knows what's going to happen around here. It will be better all around if you will return there now."

Eastwood released Marian, and she stood aside, wiping her eyes and still shaking with weeping. Mrs. Stone went up to her gently and was about to lead her back down the corridor when the girl gave a gasp of astonishment.

"Look!" she cried. "Where did that come from?"

She pointed at her feet, where a sealed envelope lay, the address-side turned upward, and the superscription written so boldly that even from where they stood they could read it. The address was:

"TO YOU POOR GROUP OF IDIOTS!"

Keene stooped and picked it up, and ripping open the flap, took out a sheet of notepaper. Both the address and the message itself were in the form of printed characters—there was no possible hope of identifying the writing.

"I failed twice to-night," it read, "but I shall not always fail. Perhaps it was better that I should. You may be sure that my purpose will be achieved. The Dale girl will see her lover die before her eyes—a torturing, terrible death. She herself will shortly follow, but not until she has suffered first as is proper and just under the circumstances. And, finally, this mystery will be explained to the full satisfaction of your impossible scientific detective—but he shall not know before. When the seventh shadow creeps on the wall, two shall die, and Keene will understand.

"Why not go to sleep now, like sensible people? Dawn is on the hilltops; pink, beautiful dawn. I am weary with the night's revel, and shall not trouble you—for a few hours at least.

"Pleasant dreams!"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DAGGER STRIKES

"DAWN is on the hill-tops!"

The mysterious sender of that extraordinary message had spoken truly. Already, as he looked down the corridor through the open door of his laboratory, Keene could see through the windows the first streakings of pink and gray that foretold the coming of the morning. As he confronted the silent figures before him; as he looked into the puzzled, sympathetic face of Mrs. Stone, the care-worn, harassed face of Marian Dale, the anxious face of Jack Eastwood, the detective was himself a striking contrast to them all. For him the battle was just beginning; the zest and enthusiasm for the chase was now warming his soul; far from showing fatigue or discouragement, his face was bright with a fresh glow. He had asked for more facts; now he was getting them.

He tapped the note tentatively against the open palm of his left hand.

"Our foes confess their weariness," he said. "Whether we can trust them is quite another question. But we need not trust them. When the sun comes the shadows flee away. I believe the danger is over—for the present. Mrs. Stone, I wish you would take Miss Dale to your room now, and she must sleep for the rest of the morning. You must remain awake and guard her until I secure some one to relieve you. Mr. Eastwood, I am going to ask that you remain in the library until I have time to talk to you. You and Blake had better come in now."

The two women went up the stairway as Keene and Eastwood crossed to the library, followed by the silent Blake. Eastwood protested against Keene's course; he said that the danger was undoubtedly still present, and that they should organize a search through the house at once. But Keene, after hearing him through, patiently, merely shook his head in cryptic silence and passed thoughtfully into the library. Abstractedly he motioned Eastwood to a chair, and he threw himself into an easy position on a sofa.

"For the next ten minutes," he said, "I wish that neither of you would disturb me. I have got enough to keep my mind busy for that long—and I can't think if I am interrupted."

Blake cast a reproachful glance at the detective. He seemed to take the remark as a personal aspersion. If so, it was certainly unjustified, for Blake never spoke except when spoken to.

Keene's mind was ready now to grapple with the problem. In orderly array, the problems of the case shaped themselves before his mind. He must find out how the shadows were produced, the mechanical means by which they were effected. The crimson candles, too. He must learn how they had been smuggled into Marian's room and placed on her bureau, without discovery. And how had they been lighted? He must see those candles—Marian had not told him whether they disappeared with the shadows or had remained on the bureau. Candles that lighted themselves should be worth seeing. He must make a careful examination of Marian's apartment; the arrangement of the place undoubtedly would suggest something. The letter which he held, the mysterious communication which had suddenly appeared in their midst, that was a physical clue, which, under certain chemical treatments in his laboratory, might disclose secrets regarding the writer that might lead to the discovery of his identity.

The fact that the mysterious enemy had gained entrance to his own home, and was there working about his scheme of terror and death, goaded every instinct within Keene to do his utmost. In swift retrospect he went over every detail that had been told him by Marian Dale and by Professor Rust; he recalled every dramatic detail of the exciting incidents within his own walls during the last few hours, and tried to reconcile some basic fact to harmonize them. It was a difficult, indeed, it seemed a hopeless, task.

Ten minutes and five more had flitted by, and the detective had not yet opened his eyes. He was considering the various possibilities of guilt, and seeking a possible motive. Jack Eastwood? Yes, he had a motive, at least a possible one. Marian had willed him all her money. That was a preposterous thing to do; possibly he had urged her to do that very thing. Suppose that he was married already and was playing a crooked game? He might conspire to murder her, and then claim her fortune. But—and here was the question Keene could not begin to answer—why should he adopt such bizarre and unheard-of tactics to accomplish that end?

The fact did remain, however, that Eastwood had been discovered under strange circumstances in the corridor. And it was a fact which he himself admitted that he made a hobby of shadow pictures. He had a well-substantiated yarn about his presence in the house. That was the case, for and against Eastwood.

Annette, the maid of Marian Dale? Perhaps. She might have a motive, though Keene, of course, knew of none. He would interview Annette that morning.

The discarded suitor? There was a possibility. Keene would interview Miss Dale, find out more about this individual, and put one of his operatives on his trail.

Who else?

Now, Keene was the kind of detective who never rejected a theory because it sounded absurd. He followed every little lead, until convinced that the vein was exhausted and there was nothing more to be gained. Consequently he also considered Professor Rust as a possible factor.

Rust had made a remark that stuck in Keene's mind. It was the remark that Marian's mother had once been his sweetheart; that she had thrown him down for another, "and lived to repent it," as the professor had added bitterly. Was he wreaking the accumulated venom of years in a bizarre revenge upon Marian? Such things were not unheard of.

Suddenly two memories, exactly opposite, came together in the investigator's mind, and he sat bolt upright, his eyes blinking in sudden anticipation.

"Blake," he said. "I have been wanting to ask you a few questions about that cobra. You got into position behind the book-case curtains, through the secret panel, just after serving those sandwiches, didn't you? Well, how did you discover the snake?"

"I knew it was there all along, sir," returned Blake, solemnly.

Keene started in amazement.

"What do you mean by that?" he demanded, wondering if Blake actually knew to be true what he himself had only suspected.

"I smelled it when I brought in the tray," replied Blake. "I knew I could not be mistaken. I acted as I believed you would have me act, by getting the best weapon I could find and taking a position of vantage."

There was a tense silence for a moment, and then Keene asked:

"Where do you suppose the snake came from, Blake?"

In reply, the man pointed at an object left near the leg of the library table. It was a travelling bag, and the initials "P. R." were printed in angular black letters on one end. It was Philemon Rust's bag.

"He left it!" exclaimed Keene delightedly. "That is the very thing I had in mind. Do you suppose he could have carried the cobra in here in that?"

He lifted the suitcase, and then stopped aghast. One end of it was loose; in fact, was nothing more than a dangling flap of curtain, shielding an opening at one end of the case. Two spring catches, operated from the handle of the bag, controlled the flap, which was freely perforated to admit the air.

"There's nothing unusual about that bag," interposed Eastwood, who had been watching and listening intently. "People carry pet dogs on trains in bags like that, and deceive the conductors. You can get them in many leather shops."

"Exactly!" returned Keene. "They are splendidly convenient for carrying around live-stock. Just put that bag aside, in a safe place, for the present, Blake."

When Blake returned, Keene had resumed his position on the sofa, and his eyes were closed. The attendant knew that the scientist was groping with the problem again in the silence of his own heart and mind, and the grim lines around Keene's mouth told him that he was drawing nearer to a solution of the problem.

"Get me an almanac, Blake," ordered Keene, suddenly.

In less than two minutes Blake was back, with an almanac, opened at a certain page. He offered it with a certain pride to Keene, and the latter rewarded him with a bright smile.

"I see your mind is running in the same channel," he remarked, as he saw that the almanac had been opened at the very page he wished. "Now we're getting somewhere."

Eastwood scratched his head meditatively.

"You'll excuse me," he said, "but I am a little puzzled. I don't know yet why Marian is here with you. I don't know who you are, or what your game is. I don't even know your name. And I'll be damned if I know why, in all this mix-up, you have to consult an almanac!"

Keene smiled whimsically.

"You may be the guilty man," he said reflectively, "and yet you haven't got the look of a criminal about you in any way. At all events, I think you are entitled to some sort of explanation—you may help out in an emergency at that. But I shall have to defer a translation of the almanac until a later date!"

Upon which he sketched briefly the extraordinary circumstances in which Marian Dale had found herself involved in the last few hours. Time and time again the big handsome fellow clenched his fists as he learned to what the girl he loved had been subjected. He begged Keene to allow him to explore the house.

"There are to be seven shadows, you remember. Keene reminded him, "and so far there have only been four—the dog, the highwayman, the snake and the dagger. 'When the seventh shadow creeps on the wall' says this charming little message, so you see we have three to go. And from the looks of this case I believe we shall actually see all three of those shadows."

"You have formed a theory, then, Mr. Keene?"

"Not a bit of it. I have seen several floating nebulously in the ether. Any of them may be right; all may be right, in fact, and yet, very probably, all may be wrong. But one thing I'll swear to, that after I have a look over the ground, with Blake at my side, this morning, the theory of this thing will leap into my mind almost unbidden. I am working toward the light now!"

"Great!" breathed Jack Eastwood. And then, with a deep frown he leaned forward.

"Why, do you suppose, they shot at me a little while ago?" he asked, pointing at the bullet-hole above the library mantel.

"The note explains that," answered the detective. "You are to die so that Marian Dale will suffer. That, in itself, suggests the real motive, and yet it may be only a clever blind. Don't forget that we're dealing with an infernally clever man."

Keene relapsed into brooding silence again, a silence that was broken at last by the tingling of the telephone bell. Blake answered it, and then, with a solemn nod, passed the instrument into the detective's hand.

"Mr. Keene speaking," he said, briskly. Then, with a face as expressionless as a dead man, he listened to the message that was spoken sharply, hurriedly, excitedly, into his ear. A short "All right!" ended the conversation, and he hung up the receiver.

"Professor Philemon Rust is dead," he said, sternly. "He was discovered murdered not an hour ago—stabbed to death! And his body was in the apartment of Miss Marian Dale!"

CHAPTER SIX

KEENE IS WARNED

SO it was murder at last! The fiend who had painted his devilish moving shadows, omens and portents of evil, upon the walls, had struck the killing blow. Where the flying knife aimed at Keene, the poised cobra and the shot had failed, the dagger had won. And its victim was an innocent, scholarly old gentleman!

Yet, was he that?

As Keene sat forward, his head in his hands, trying to absorb this latest development in the problem, that question was uppermost in his mind. Rust had not been above suspicion in his own mind not half an hour before. And what had Rust been doing in Marian's rooms? Had he means of access there? If so, might not that very fact throw a great deal of light on the problem?

And yet, if he were guilty, who would have killed him? Where had Annette, the French maid, been when he was slain? Where was she now?

There was no time to be lost. Torn between his anxiety to be at the actual investigation of the facts and his desire to protect the girl who had been brought under his own care by the very man who had just been murdered, Keene felt at a loss how to proceed. Fiercely he swore to himself that nothing should harm Marian; that the vile plot against her should not succeed; that, cost what it might, she should be protected.

"Eastwood," he said, suddenly, "I believe you are innocent in this business, and I've thought so all along. Somebody has got to protect your fiancé and I cannot remain here to do it. Are you willing to take that as your job? To stay here and guard her door with very life until I return? For I tell you, man, against this fiend we are fighting now, we've got to put our very best. Are you——"

"Am I?"

Jack Eastwood stood up his full six feet and his chest swelled with pride.

"I'd just like to get within arm's reach of one of them," he grated out, savagely. "By thunder, I'd——"

But Keene didn't let him finish. He was too busy giving him instructions what he should do and how he should do it in his absence.

He suggested that he remain where he was, in the library, and promised that breakfast would be served him in a little while, when Mrs. Stone would assume direction of the servants who had not been aroused through all the weird happenings during the small hours of the morning. To this Eastwood acquiesced, with the stipulation that he would prowl around occasionally and follow up any unusual sound he might hear. To which Keene agreed, remarking that about the only unusual sound he might overhear would be the bacon sizzling in the kitchen downstairs.

Keene then went upstairs and rapped softly on the door of Mrs. Stone. That faithful guardian of the persecuted Marion answered the rap, and told the detective her charge had fallen asleep only a little while before. Already Keene had determined not to break the news of Rust's murder to the girl until he had to. As a scientist, with considerable medical training, he realized that this additional shock might have the most dangerous consequences.

With some parting instructions to Mrs. Stone, Keene came downstairs again and bade Eastwood good-by. Blake, who was always everywhere and nowhere at once, who never asked questions and always knew what to do, was ready with his overcoat and small satchel in which Keene carried mysterious appliances of service to him on criminal cases. During Keene's absence, Blake had telephoned for Keene's automobile, which was now panting at the curb outside, and the detective and his assistant went speeding down the long avenue within three minutes from Keene's parting from Mrs. Stone.

Glancing out of the window, Keene noted that the sun was already glowing warmly across the east, and that the day would be a sweet one. Unconsciously he contrasted the calm, serene loveliness of the morning with the deadly terrors of the night, horrors which had come to a climax in the murder of Philemon Rust.

"What do you make of it, Blake?" he asked.

Blake glanced at him shrewdly.

"Had you thought of the motive, sir?" he asked.

"Several."

"Don't you believe there is one underlying characteristic of the whole job?"

Keene smiled appreciatively.

"You'll be a detective before you're through," he said, joyously. "Your thoughts often echo mine, sometimes I fancy they are ahead of me. You are right. That underlying characteristic is the big thing—the tell-tale clue—after all. They may cover up their tracks—and they've been damned clever about it—but that one tell-tale characteristic leaves them wide open to any one possessing ordinary horse sense."

Blake nodded his head sagely and agreed.

The car drew up close to the curbing, and stopped. Blake was out in a trice, and Keene followed him, to find himself before a handsome twelve-story apartment house, recently erected, on the lordliest portion of what Albert Noyes called the "lordliest street in the world." A policeman came up to them.

"Mr. Keene?" he inquired, touching his hat respectfully.

"I am Mr. Keene."

"The chief's upstairs, sir, and told me to watch out for you. It's a terrible business, Mr. Keene—not another murder like it in the history of the department. Better hurry right upstairs, sir; it's on the ninth floor, Apartment B."

With a friendly nod, Keene passed into the austere lobby of the apartment house and made his way to the elevator. One question was agitating his mind considerably at this juncture. In many celebrated criminal cases his profound knowledge of science had frequently been of great service to the city detective department. This much the detectives themselves were quite ready to admit. What they would not confess so readily, however, was the fact that Keene's shrewd deductions, sometimes amounting to an almost uncanny insight into the secrets of a problem, had put them on the right track at times when the whole force was hopelessly puzzled. Some newspapers had given Keene considerable hysterical publicity over one or two recent cases, and this, he had realized, had stirred up antagonism among some of the regular operatives. He had been quick to sense and identify this feeling of professional jealousy.

Consequently the sudden telephone message, apprising him of the murder of Philemon Rust, was a surprise to him. The chief, Burkehart, himself, had called him. Why should they call upon him so quickly, so frantically, within an hour of the discovery of the crime? This was the question that was bothering Keene as the elevator bore him swiftly upward to the ninth floor.

Followed by Blake, he emerged into the corridor and the shrill sobbing of a high-pitched feminine voice told him that a woman, most probably Annette, the maid, was making the situation worse.

As Keene stepped to the door, Chief Burkehart, a big, bluff man, with bristling grizzled mustache, came up to him with an air of brusque politeness and greeted him.

"Sorry to get you down here," he barked, "but this is a case where nothing else could be done. Come in and see for yourself."

Keene followed him down a narrow hallway, through an elegantly fitted reception room, then through a library, and passing through a second doorway toward the left, found himself in the boudoir of Marian Dale. By its daintiness, its girlish charm and simplicity, Keene identified it at once. But his attention was chained to what lay before him on the floor.

Philemon Rust, the man who had left his door so short a while before, lay stark in sudden death. Flat on his back he lay prone, with his arms flung wide, and his stiff fingers distended as if about to close upon some ghastly antagonist. The face was like a mask of despair; such an expression was on it as Doré gave the condemned souls in his pictures of the Inferno. It was as if the old scholar, detected suddenly in his ward's apartment, had seen instead of some human person a phantom or a fiend. His wide-staring eyes, his sunken jaw and wide-open mouth, the furrows of the forehead, all spoke of a mortal fear. A dagger had been thrust in his throat, the floor was stained scarlet. And there was something white pinned to his shirt front.

"That," said Burkehart, grimly pointing, "was what made us send for you. That's a little love-note, addressed to you."

Keene bent low beside the fallen form and examined what he saw to be a sheet of white paper, on which a message had been written. The words, with their oddly printed characters, seemed to leap up at him, and he could not restrain a gasp of astonishment. For the characters were too familiar to be mistaken; the same hand which had traced that note which had fallen at their feet in his own home had written this second communication.

"Let this be a warning to Mr. Gordon Keene," read the note. "Let him look long upon the corpse of the man who brought Marian Dale to him. Professor Rust has learned too much. Mr. Gordon Keene had best look to it that he himself does not make a similar mistake."

Keene looked up quizzically at the stern-faced detective chief.

"You're not putting any skids in my way, are you?" he remarked. "I am not usually disturbed by threats, but this fellow means business. And," he added, raising his voice, "if he is within sound of my voice now, he may as well understand that I know far more about it now than he suspects, and that I am going to get him within twenty-four hours."

Without pausing, the investigator stood up and walked nearer to the chief.

"Tell me what led up to this," he asked.

In a few, terse sentences, Burkehart explained. At midnight Miss Dale, the lessee of the apartment, had suddenly left the building. That, reflected Keene, was when she went to see Rust and tell him her story. Annette Desire, the maid, being left alone in the apartment, locked it up and went out, informing the telephone operator that she was going home to spend the remainder of the evening with her mother. That left the apartment deserted. Several hours later, Professor Rust appeared in the corridor. He was a familiar visitor and was immediately recognized by the attendants. He informed them that Miss Dale would not return home that evening, but that she had asked him to get some articles for her. The clerk lent him a pass-key and he was taken upstairs in the elevator.

"That," Keene decided, "may be explained on several premises. But the most probable explanation is that the poor old fellow meant to go up there and do some detective work on his own account."

No one, continued Burkehart, had seen him come down, and his presence upstairs was forgotten. About six o'clock in the morning, Annette Desiré had returned, complaining that she had lost her key, and asked the clerk to let her in. He told her that he believed Professor Rust was still up there, but she laughed at such an idea as preposterous, and insisted that he unlock the door for her. Accordingly, the clerk lent her a second pass-key—the one Rust had taken had not been returned—and, remarking jokingly that he would not lose a second one, went up in the car with her. It was the clerk himself who opened the door, and who was surprised at seeing all the lights in the apartment on, and some evidences of confusion; an overturned chair, and a smashed reading lamp. Followed by the French girl, he had hurried through the various rooms and come finally upon the corpse of Professor Rust.

The detective stared moodily over the officer's head. In many ways he had a great respect for the force, but he did not credit it with too much initiative, or imagination. And he did not believe that the officer would get much farther in his investigation, if he were to see what Keene was seeing at that particular moment.

Keene was looking at a shadow. It was the fifth of that mysterious series, and it had suddenly appeared in a circle of morning sunlight on the bed-room wall. It was the shadow of two hands—long, thin, tapering hands. One held a tiny tumbler, the other a vial. And from the vial, drops were falling into the tumbler.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A DOUBLE MYSTERY.

POISON! And defiance!

Those were the words that flashed across the mind of the detective as he beheld that sinister shadow on the wall. It was a clear and definite prophecy of the form the next attack from the enemy would assume. And, defiant of his powers of penetration, scornful of the possibility of detection, the singular shadow came upon the wall almost immediately after he entered the room.

It was as fleeting as all the others had been. Scarcely had the detective time to understand its meaning before it disappeared. There was no blurring of its lines; no gradual melting away—it simply vanished while he was looking at it.

"What are you staring at so hard?" asked Burkehart, suspiciously.

"Nothing at all—just thinking over matters," replied Keene abstractedly. He turned to the doorway and saw Blake there, with an expression in his eyes the detective had seen there many times before. It was a signal light, and it meant that Blake, acting under instructions given him by Keene during the ride in the automobile, had found something.

"Do you mind if I look around a bit on my own account?" asked Keene, casually. "You know my methods and you will understand that I did have a little hand in this game before it became murder. Now, don't ask me to open up just this minute. Give me an hour in this apartment, and then I'll tell you all that I know."

Burkehart looked undecided. He felt he should get everything out of Keene then and there. But he also remembered that Keene had saved many a case in the past, and he was unwilling to risk antagonizing him.

"Very well," he assented grudgingly. "Look around as you please. But I don't think you'll find very much—I've been busy myself, you know."

Keene's reply to that was a little laugh which Burkehart did not understand.

He passed out of the room of death, with a last glance at the body of Philemon Rust, and stopped in the hallway, where Blake had retired to wait for him.

"What?" he whispered questioningly.

"Look on the sill of the bed-room window," advised Blake, eagerly.

There was no time for anything but the most hurried consultation, for at any moment they might be interrupted, and Keene did not want the police to know the inside facts—or rather mysteries—of the affair, until he had it further in hand.

"Your orders are these," he snapped, crisply. "Get an absolute lay of the land around here. Get it so clear in your mind that you can draw a perfect map of it. Then make a careful examination of the fire-escapes. You know the methods I have shown you. After that, get out on your second job. I want a complete life history of Marian Dale's parents, individually, before they were married. Also find out every detail you can about the private life of Annette Desiré. Get me a picture of Miss Dale's father and mother, if you can. But particularly find out about the maid. She is very important!"

Blake touched his hat respectfully.

"Floor plans. Fire escape. Miss Dale's parents. Annette Desiré."

He repeated the words like a parrot. And then he slouched off down the hallway to mingle with the many policemen and men from headquarters who crowded the apartment. As Keene turned to go back to the bed-room, he could hear the agonized voice of the maid, as she answered the searching queries of the detectives, who were already applying a premature "third degree."

Blake had said: "Look on the sill of the bed-room window." So that was Keene's next step. In Blake he had found an assistant at once wily and wise, and he knew that he could depend on him to ferret out something. Without an original cell in his brain, he could adopt the

methods shown him and apply them with marvelous facility. And so, while Keene had been talking to Burkehart and examining the body of Rust, Blake had not been idle, and had come upon something on the window sill. It was with a suppressed curiosity, therefore, that the detective strolled across the room, stopped to examine the pearl-handled, antique dagger with which Rust had been slain, and finally stopped moodily, as if reflecting, before the window at the far end of the room.

There was nothing on the window sill. Keene waited for a moment, and then passed on until he stood before the center one. Instantly he saw what had stirred Blake so. Tucked away in one corner, against a bit of carved moulding, which prevented them from falling to the street below, were three red wax candles.

Keene glanced behind him. The room was empty, save for himself and the dead body on the floor. Burkehart had been called to listen to what Annette Desiré had to say. Quickly he lifted the window, his hand seized the three candles and hid them away in his pocket. Gently lowering the window, he turned away. One clue that was worth while at last was in his possession.

Burkehart bounced in the room at the next moment.

"Well, Keene," he said, "how much more time are you going to spend mooning around this household? Seems to me you ought to be helping justice by telling us more about this man and what you know about this case. What?"

Blake entered just at this juncture and Keene did not reply. The assistant gave Keene an envelope, which was sealed.

"Those are the plans you asked for, Mr. Keene," he said, deferentially. Keene nodded as if the matter were of no consequence and thrust the envelope into his pocket. Blake bowed again and left—to finish the assignments which Keene had given him.

"Well, Burkehart," replied the detective heartily, "I think you are right. I am going to 'spill the whole works,' as the slang dictionaries phrase it, and then, if you are not willing to follow my lead, we'll split, and see who gets there first. For I tell you frankly, I am determined to get there."

"Go ahead and spill," said Burkehart, magnificently.

In rapid fashion Keene related the facts as he knew them, circumstantially, and without embellishment. As various expressions chased themselves across the hardened visage of the unimaginative Burkehart, his countenance was a study for a cartoonist. Interest, swiftly changing to incredulity, then to amazement, to thrilled horror, and then to absolute dismay, were written there as faithfully as the human physiognomy can betray feelings and emotions.

"Great thunder!" he said, in a low, awe-filled tone, as Keene wound up with the story of the fifth shadow on the wall. "It sounds like a story in a book. Have you formed any theory, Mr. Keene?"

"I have!" answered Keene, emphatically. "I believe I know now. But I am not sure. So I ask of you, earnestly, not to interfere during the next few hours. If you will only be guided by me——"

Burkehart growled impatiently.

"Have you any idea how those shadows were produced?" he asked.

"Yes. I know how they were produced. It was the last shadow which absolutely confirmed my opinion."

"What is it then, for the love of Mike? Some sort of pocket projection apparatus?"

Keene nodded his head in a vigorous negative.

"Well, what in——"

Keene got up from his chair.

"You will excuse me," he said, bluntly. "That is only a romantic detail—the product of a particularly vivid and malicious imagination. The essential thing is that murder has been done and that two other lives are in danger—Jack Eastwood and Marian Dale. We can't afford to lose time—that last threatening shadow was not a joke. It meant that one or the other them was to be——"

"Poisoned!" cried Burkehart.

"You have it. Poisoned! We don't know where or how the blow will fall next. I, myself, am in danger if I press this thing. But I am going to press it to the limit. Now, this much I will tell you—Annette Desiré, your French maid in the room yonder, is an important figure in this case. Hold on to her as tightly as you can. She is not the guiding intelligence, but there is no question in my mind that she has been a facile tool, and more than that, a willing tool, in the hands of some superior, some more cunning, infinitely malicious mentality. When my man Blake returns I expect to find the motive behind this thing. And when I get that motive I will get my man!"

Burkehart considered only a second or so.

"Keene, I'll go you," he said, "and there's my hand on it. If there's any man who can solve this thing, I believe you are the man. There are many scientific features in it which would baffle an ordinary detective in any case. Such as those shadows, for instance. And those candles that lighted themselves. We couldn't make heads or tails of monkey business like that."

"Scientific child's play," retorted Keene. "Better put that woman under arrest and lock her up in solitary confinement. Don't let any one see her."

A commotion behind them caused both men to run. In the doorway, wringing her hands, the tears streaming down her pallid face, stood Mrs. Stone, the light of fright and terror in her face, swaying as if about to fall.

"What's the matter?" cried Keene, springing toward her and catching her in his arms. "Why did you come here? Why didn't you phone? What has happened?"

Dumbly the woman tried to speak. Vainly she sought for words, and at last, croakingly, feebly, she found the power to speak.

"Marian—is—gone!" she gasped. "I left the room just for a moment, when I heard Mr. Eastwood calling and shouting. When I came back—she—had—disappeared!"

Keene was seeing red that moment. His fists were clenched, his eyes blazing.

"What was that fellow Eastwood doing?" he cried, his forehead seared with an ominous frown.

"He was shouting for assistance," gasped Mrs. Stone. "One of the maids had given him—his breakfast—and the—coffee—must—have—been—poisoned!"

With that last, fatal word Mrs. Stone swooned into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN THE DARKNESS

A SHUDDER of horror at the ghastliness of the series of misfortunes ran through Keene's body as he lifted the weak form of his housekeeper and carried her to a couch. Burkehart, chewing his mustache savagely and too startled to know what to say, followed him like a man in a dream.

Keene turned and confronted him.

"Please watch out for her," he said, pointing to the silent form of the white-haired woman on the couch. "The

night has been too much for her. She has been with me two years, apparently as my housekeeper. In reality she is one of the keenest-witted women in the business, a wonder at deduction, and one of my most valued assistants. Perhaps the next blow may be at her."

A grin of admiration broke on Burkehart's face, in spite of his confusion of mind.

"You're a wonder," he admitted. "Who would ever suspect that simple-faced old lady was a detective. No wonder you can get results. Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Back to my own house," answered Keene, hurriedly. "Send Blake there if he should return here. Tell him to hurry. I'll let you know what happens as soon as I get there. And you be guided by me, will you?"

"Sure! We'll work this thing out together," answered Burkehart, grandly. And Keene hurried out to the elevator. As he leaped into his waiting automobile and told the chauffeur to take him home at his best speed, Keene was feverish and impatient. His coolness and abstraction had deserted him the moment Mrs. Stone had brought him this last fearful intelligence. He had forgotten to ask if a doctor had been got for Eastwood. But he felt sure that had been done. He must interrogate the servants who had prepared the breakfast. But, most important of all, he must examine that bed chamber, and try to get on the trail of the missing Marian. What might not be happening to her now!

Some premonition of the terrible truth behind the strange events which he had witnessed Keene already had sensed. The "underlying characteristic," which he had so cryptically discussed with Blake, had pointed the way. Stirring at the bottom of his mind the kernel of the real truth of the matter was beginning to sprout, but in his present state Keene was not ready to receive it.

As he reached his own doorway, and sprang to the curb, he was surprised to find Blake waiting for him on the step. Blake's face was solemn. He greeted his master with a manner that showed he knew much.

"The servants have told me," he said, briefly. "Mr. Eastwood is very ill. It is arsenic."

Keene winced. So the fifth shadow had not lied. It had been poison, and its victim had not escaped. If he died the infamous prophecy of the note would be fulfilled, and even if Marian Dale's life were to be saved, her heart would be broken. In a rush of feeling Keene vowed again to himself that it should not be so; that the dastardly plot should not succeed.

They had carried Eastwood to Keene's bed-room, and two neighborhood physicians had been called. They were working anxiously over the tossing figure on the bed. At a glance Keene saw that he was in a bad way; that his life, indeed, was suspended by a thread.

"Hadn't you better take him to a hospital?" he asked.

But the physicians said that all that could be done was being done. They were not willing to offer much hope.

Keene next hurried to the boudoir where Marian Dale had been so peacefully sleeping when last he had been outside its door. The door was wide open now. He strode in impetuously. There was no sign of struggle. Everything was in its place; even the bed clothes were laid back neatly. There was not a single indication to show that anything mysterious had occurred here; the disappearance of the girl had apparently been consummated without making a wrinkle.

"Kidnapped without a clue," muttered Keene, angrily. He went to the windows, he got down on his knees and crawled back and forth across the floor; he peered into odd corners; he went to a thousand pains to be thorough, and spent more than an hour prowling around that single apartment. When he got up, flushed, dusty, and disheartened, he had not learned a single thing.

Blake was standing impassively in the doorway. In his quiet, unostentatious fashion, he had helped Keene a score of times during that wearisome and fruitless search. Now that he saw the detective's work along that particular line was completed, he came forward to ask if he could do anything more.

"Did you learn what I asked?" asked Keene.

"I did. The telephone girl in the apartment house knew their life history."

Blake fumbled in his pockets and produced two portraits, one of a man, the other a woman. These he offered Keene, with that peculiar elation which comes to one who knows that he has served a good cause and served it well.

"Splendid!" cried Keene, heartened a little, as he snatched the pictures. He studied first the face of the woman.

"Look!" he cried. "This is Marian Dale's mother. Lord, how alike they look. Marian must be to-day the very image of her mother at that age."

And then, as his eyes fell on the other picture, he started up, with a look of triumphant conviction in his eyes.

"There!" he cried. "It is just as I could have sworn to be. Give us one more link, Blake!"

The assistant bowed low.

"Exactly!" he murmured. "That is precisely what I have been thinking, sir. It is up to us to find the missing link."

Keene was still busy comparing the pictures. Evidently he found them fascinating, for he studied them with rapt attention. Reluctantly he laid them on the bureau beside him and turned again to Blake.

"What is the family story?" he asked.

"It is a family scandal," replied Blake, solemnly. "But I can tell you about it in a nutshell."

"Well, do that," insisted Keene. "We haven't a moment to waste!"

Blake made another of his inevitable bows.

"Marian Dale's father had a love affair before he was married," he said, speaking very quickly. "He threw that woman down to marry Marian's mother. The woman he jilted never forgave him. He was a rascal anyway; he broke his wife's heart, and she died when Marian was born. He died under very suspicious circumstances right after that; there was some talk that he was poisoned."

The detective and his assistant looked into each other's eyes and there was a world of understanding in their gaze.

"And then?"

"The woman who was jilted was known to be of a terrible passion when aroused. She was originally an actress, and Dale jilted her, I understand, because she was beneath him socially. She had a daughter by him, which he never recognized. From the day that child was born, the pair disappeared off the face of the earth. But people said that when Dale died so mysteriously——"

Keene interrupted him.

"Light!" he cried. "In darkness there will be light. It has never failed me yet. Here, Blake, take these candles. Search the neighborhood in the vicinity of the apartment house where Marian Dale lived and find out where they were purchased, and if possible, who bought them. Find out where that cobra was secured. Then go to the nearest drugstore and find out who, within the last few weeks, bought a quantity of metallic potassium—flakes of potassium."

Blake stared blankly.

"What did they want them for?" he asked.

But Keene slapped his hands smartly together in his impatience, and Blake vanished from the doorway like a flash.

There was a new light on the detective's face as he got up and stole from the room. Down the steps he went noiselessly until he reached the library, where, only a few hours before, he had first heard the weird story from the trembling lips of Marian. How much had happened since that time!"

He entered the library and closed the door softly behind him. The curtains were still drawn; he flashed off the lights, and the place was flooded with a blackness in which he could not see his own hand before him.

And it w in that utter darkness that Gordon Keene seated himself in an arm-chair and began his final solution of the mystery of the Seven Shadows. Five shadows he had already known. He had the facts now that he needed, and in this blackness he could concentrate all his powers to get at the truth quickly.

For he was determined the remaining two shadows should never appear.

CHAPTER NINE

WHOSE HANDS?

THERE is an ancient screed which says: "There are more ways than one of killing a dog." It might have been spoken specifically of the detective profession. For there are more ways than one of detecting a criminal. One may be possessed of even less than the average intelligence, yet having the single virtue of tenacity, of bulldog persistency, the spirit that never lets go, may win distinction in the tracking of criminals. That is the way of the average headquarters "shadow." Another sleuth will have a passion for detail; he will insist on making the most minute examination of everything connected with the case. Some pin their success on the adoption of new and unusual principles, such as Burns did with the dictagraph.

And there are a very few who view a crime as an intellectual problem, akin to a problem in algebra. Such investigators require certain salient facts, many of which they secure for themselves, others are brought to them by clever assistants. With these facts as a basis, they retire to themselves and arrange those facts in an algebraic progression, with X as the unknown quantity. And the selfsame "X"—the criminal—is thus discovered by the pure light of reasoning.

That was the way of Gordon Keene.

Utter concentration was what he needed now—a concentration where every extraneous influence was removed. In his darkened library, where not a ray of light now penetrated, he sat smoking and dreaming. No need in the dark to close his eyes. The mental pictures which he visioned rose before him like dimly-lighted, ghostly things; they were the factors in the algebra of crime, and masked among them was the figure of the arch criminal he was determined to detect.

The group of facts with which he had to deal was almost complete. He knew the phenomena with which he had to deal—the singular incidents which began with the shadow of a spaniel, and had come to a climax in the poisoning of Jack Eastwood and the disappearance of Marian Dale. A motive was already clearly established in his mind. The thing to do was to correlate those facts—to put his finger on the vital spots.

An hour passed, and Keene was still puzzling over that array of mysteries. A knock came to the door; it was Blake, back in an incredibly short time with all the information Keene desired. A woman had purchased the candles; a woman had bought the cobra from a dealer in snakes for circus performers; a woman had secured a small quantity of metallic potassium in a drugstore not far from the apartment house. In every instance a woman.

"Did the same description apply in all cases?" asked Keene.

Blake leaned forward and whispered something rapidly into the detective's ear. The detective nodded quickly. Matters were shaping themselves quickly; he saw the crisis that was rapidly approaching.

"Just a moment, Blake," he said anxiously. "On my way back here from the apartment house I studied that map you drew of Miss Dale's apartment. You are certain everything is accurate?"

"Certain!"

"Then, Blake, these are your final instructions."

Rapidly he sketched out a course of plain action for the attentive assistant. He repeated them so that there could be no possibility of a single direction being misunderstood.

"Now," he concluded, "when you have done all that I ask, which should not take more than an hour or two at the most, rap three times on that door. I shall know by that sign that you have succeeded. And by that time, you may rest assured, I shall have completed my case and we will be ready to spring the trap."

Blake gave a last and sweeping bow and departed. Keene shut the door carefully behind him, and retired back through the gloom of the library, finding his chair again with some difficulty. The silence was grateful.

"In every case a woman!"

The phrase was like a song of triumph in Keene's mind. Those words Blake had whispered to him; they told him an infinite story in themselves. Motive? Why, it was clear as——

Light itself, he had been about to say. And it came as a shock that as the word "light" was in his mind, light itself should appear within that room of complete blackness.

It was a very tiny circle, but it was a circle of brilliant light, and it glowed brightly at the other end of the room. Barely had it caught the detective's eye when it began to grow—widening in an increasing circle until it was as big as a dinner plate, larger still, until it was like the miniature glow of a magic lantern.

"The sixth shadow!" he muttered to himself. "What will it be?"

He was not left long in doubt. Two hands appeared again, thin and shapely hands, the same, he could have sworn, that he had seen on the wall of the apartment house a few hours before. But they held no vial of poison now. They held something else, the shape of which was so awkward, so unnatural, so utterly unlike anything that occurred to his memory, that he could not conceive what it might be.

The shadow those shadowy hands clasped was of something round, like a ball cut in half—like a small bowl, though it had edges and bulges that made it unlike either of these things. Apparently it was being handled with great care, as if it must be very carefully adjusted. It was placed prone on one of the hands; then the other disappeared.

Presently the hand came again, and now it held a vial of the same size Keene had seen before. And again drops fell from it but now, instead of falling into a tumbler, they fell upon the oddly shaped thing in the other hand.

At the same moment Keene was sensible of a pungent, familiar smell.

"An ether basket," he gasped, but before he could make a move, something moved behind him in the dark; the basket was fastened over his nose, and its overwhelming odor clouded all his senses. But he did not give up. Desperately he held in his breath; he made a mighty struggle to free himself from its influence, but the effort came too late. Taken unaware, he had breathed in, and the influence already was upon him.

Weakly he dropped back into the chair. The light on the wall dwindled away into blackness; all the world seemed floating away with him.

CHAPTER TEN

GONE!

IT is now proper to record what befell Blake as he set out with the final instructions of his master still fresh in his ears.

Blake had been told to do certain things that the average man might regard as impossible, but Blake, being by nature obedient, accustomed to delivering the goods when ordered to do so, had no question in his mind that he would succeed in his hazardous undertaking. But even men as careful as Blake sometimes encounter unexpected difficulties. When he left Keene's home, Blake boarded a street-car and within ten minutes was again near the apartment house where Marian Dale made her home. It was not Blake's intention on this particular occasion, however, to return to the apartment upstairs, unless he found it necessary. Instead, he passed around to the rear of the building, waited for a favorable opportunity, and then suddenly disappeared down an opening in the cellar of the great building.

Landing without any appreciable damage to his bones, but with one rather serious rip in his trousers, Blake lost no time in floundering past coal bins, mountains of stored trunks and other such things, and finally emerged into a court-yard that separated the two wings of the apartment house. Here, to his surprise and discomfiture, he discovered that the court-yard opened, through a small alley, out into the next street; that his acrobatic performance had been altogether unnecessary, since he could have used that means of entrance, which was sacred to the urage of tradesmen. However, he had gained his point, which was to get into that court-yard without being observed by interested parties.

Promptly seeking the shelter of an alcove, Blake now made an effective if not altogether startling change in his appearance. He had entered the premises apparently a man of business, and attired as such. By depositing his felt slouch hat up his back, flat, and drawing from another hiding-place a cap with a license number on it, he gained for himself quite an official air. At the same moment he duly constituted himself an inspector of fire escapes and looked around for the particular fire escape attached to this apartment house.

There it was, built against the west wall of the building, its last rung some two feet above his head. To Blake that would be an easy matter to handle. With one athletic spring he could be scrambling up it. But that was not the point. If Keene's theory was correct—and it was Keene's theory Blake was there to substantiate with hard facts—some one else had been up against that same problem, in the early hours of this morning; some one with not a semblance of Blake's athletic prowess. The problem, then, was; how had the other party accomplished it?

At this juncture Blake stopped and made an examination of the wall near the bottom of the fire escape. Nothing was his reward. It was sheer, hard brick, without a scrape or a scar. Even so seasoned and capable an assistant could be pardoned the swear word which Blake at this juncture released to the morning zephyrs.

Balked here, Blake promptly turned his attention to other means. He prowled into all the odd corners of the place, and finally came upon something which brought a good, healthy crow of delight from his otherwise impassive countenance. Back in the shadows of a corner of the wall was a ladder, a new one, too, and if one had not set out to look for just such a thing it would have escaped observation until the apartment house crumbled to ruins.

Whistling softly to himself, Blake placed the ladder against the wall and examined it carefully. All at once he stopped whistling. He had seen there what he had hoped, but scarcely dared to believe, he would see, and it gave him joy to behold it. With a chuckle he carried it back and replaced it where he had found it. Then, with a little run, he swung himself into the air, and his two hands caught the rung of the fire escape ladder.

With practiced ease he drew himself up and by dint of hard exertion and one or two epithets not necessary to a proper understanding of what occurred, he finally managed to acquire a foothold, and at last was standing safely on the ladder. Flecking the perspiration from his forehead, he glanced around him.

"There they go! All the way up!" he said to himself, and having seen all that he cared to see, he dropped to the ground again, threw the cap he wore up in the air, and sallied out of the alley-way. Straight to the front entrance he hurried and up to the elevator. Presently he stood before the mighty Burkehart himself.

"Well? Any news?" asked Burkehart, none too graciously. He himself had learned nothing, and he was fretting with impatience.

"I have a message from Mr. Keene," replied Blake, dutifully. "He asks that you bring Annette and come at once to his home. He says he is just about ready to spring the trap."

"Well, what's he found?" snarled Burkehart, angrily. "Don't keep me in the dark like this."

"I don't know what he's found," replied Blake, truthfully enough. "What have you found?"

"Not a damned thing," answered Burkehart.

"Have you—if I may be permitted to offer a suggestion——"

"Go ahead!" prompted Burkehart, with an amused and tolerant smile.

"Had you thought of the fire escape?"

Burkehart threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"That's the best joke I've heard to-day," he chortled. "What do you think we are down here—a bunch of pikers? Of course we've thought of the fire escape, young man. Inasmuch as the door was locked on the murdered man, there wasn't much else to think of. We are certain the murdered got away by the fire escape. But how he got into the place is quite another question."

"Yes—but——" put in Blake, modestly.

"Yes—but—what?" mimicked Burkehart, impatiently.

"Couldn't the murderer have come in by the way of the fire escape?"

Burkehart heaved a martyr's sigh, and looked at the questioner with a patience that was meant to be heroic.

"You poor slob," he cried, "don't you understand that there's a drop down there of a good many feet. How the devil could any man get up there without a ladder?"

"But suppose he had a ladder?" persisted Blake.

"But he didn't," cried Burkehart in exasperation. "We looked for one and couldn't find it."

"Yes," replied Blake, courteously. "But there was a ladder, you see. I looked for it, and did find it!"

Burkehart batted his eyes as if he had been dealt a blow. He blinked at Blake in silence for a while.

"Do you mean that?" he asked, slowly, when he had regained his speech.

"I want that ladder brought over to Mr. Keene's house at once," answered Blake. "It was hidden in a deep recess just off the court-yard. It is quite important as corroborative evidence."

Burkehart got up from his chair like a chastened hippopotamus.

"Two men will be demoted for this," he growled. "I sent Hickey and Sloan down there to search that court-yard and they didn't find nothing. A fine pair of boobs!"

He strode into the next room and hurriedly issued orders to have Annette Desiré, who had ceased her weeping and was now white and defiant, taken to the department automobile that was in waiting below. Then he called savagely for the two men whose inefficiency he had discovered, and roared a definition of their abilities that exhausted the dictionaries, ecclesiastical, slangish and profane. As a final humiliation he sent them back in the court-yard to find the ladder within five minutes under pain of being sent before the board under charges. They found the ladder.

As the automobile bearing the officers, the maid and Blake drew up before the mansion of the detective, Blake leaped from the car and opened the door with his key. Asking them all to be as quiet as possible, for the sake of the man so dangerously ill on the second floor, Blake led them down the long hallway into the laboratory of Keene himself. There they found Mrs. Stone carefully setting matters to rights; she having been sent home after receiving medical attention in the Dale apartment.

She pointed silently to an array of things that lay upon a table in the center. Three red candles were there, two notes, covered with printed characters, and a few other curious articles.

"Looks like something is in the wind," commented Burkehart. He made them all sit down and then turned to Blake, who was busying himself about a dozen details, the principal one of which was the bringing of the ladder into the laboratory without breaking any of the porcelain or bottles that lay at every hand.

"Gentlemen, I shall keep you waiting only a moment longer," promised Blake, and retired down the hallway. He crossed the reception room to the library door, and struck three times upon its massive oaken panels as he had agreed. He waited for an answer. But none came.

Again he rapped, three times, as had been their private understanding. And again there was no response.

Blake wasted no more time. He knew his master too well. Quickly he found his key to the library and opened it. He stepped into complete blackness, and a heavy odor of an anesthetic. Instantly he found the electric switch and turned on the lights.

The library was deserted. Gordon Keene had disappeared, and left not a trace behind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE SEVENTH SHADOW

WHETHER it was a matter of moments or hours that he was unconscious, Keene could not tell. He came back to his senses vaguely, gradually—very slowly. As out of a mist it seemed, he emerged into the light. His first sensation was of extreme weakness, nausea, and a weariness beyond expression. He did not care where he was, nor did he wonder what had happened to him. Every thing was indistinct, blurred and uncertain.

Then slowly the mists began to clear. Events began to shape themselves clearly in his memory; the darkened library, the circle of light, the shadow of the hands dropping ether on a face basket—and then forgetfulness. With a sudden surge of awakening he realized that he had been overpowered, that he was now a prisoner. For the first time he opened his eyes.

At first he could not comprehend his position. Something was covering his mouth, a thick, irritating cloth; he felt tired and cramped and sore. He tried to shift his position, and the effort cost him tortures. Exhausted, he sank back. He rested a few moments, and then, opening his eyes again, he tried to understand his position.

He was seated in a chair; of that he presently assured himself. His feet and his hands were secured tightly with bonds of some sort; that fact, too, he quickly realized. But where he was, or in what kind of place, he had not the faintest idea. He only knew that the place was dark, and in need of ventilation. His mind was now perfectly clear, though his head ached and he suffered from nausea. Failing to discover for himself the nature of his position, he decided to listen in the hope of hearing something that might guide him.

For a long time he heard nothing at all. Once he thought he heard the sharp intake of another's breath, as if some one were quite close to him, but it was too dark to see, and his hands were bound so that he could not grope. Again he fancied he heard a low murmuring, but it was only for a moment. For the rest, the stillness was acute.

Then, a whispered voice spoke directly in his ear. He could feel the hot breath of the speaker burning his cheek.

"You remember the note of warning?" whispered the mysterious voice, which sounded vaguely familiar. It told you the Dale girl should see her lover die before her eyes. He is about to die now. Marian Dale is at your side, bound and gagged as you are. Presently the door shall swing backward and you will both see. And then the rest of that prediction will be fulfilled."

Even as the voice ceased its words came true. A door opened slowly before Keene's eyes; it fell backward slowly, revealing to his amazed vision the interior of his own bed-room. In an instant he comprehended it all. There was an ancient Chinese cabinet which he had had placed in his room, because it was considered moth-proof, to contain his clothes. Both he and Marian Dale were prisoners in that cabinet that they might witness the appalling spectacle prepared by Marian's enemy.

As the door swung slowly outward, propelled by an invisible hand, Keene glanced to his right. His eyes met the suffering glance of Marian, whose mouth was covered with a handkerchief secured with twine, and whose hands and feet were lashed to a chair. He tried to convey to her by his look the hope that something might yet happen to save her lover and herself. But in his heart he feared, at least, that it was too late to save Jack Eastwood.

The door was now completely open, and he could see his room quite plainly. Neither the doctor nor the nurse were there; only the tossing figure of Eastwood lay beneath the crumpled coverlets of the bed. He was still delirious, still muttering in his fever. But his mutterings were silenced by that mysterious voice, which came again, and whispered, hoarsely:

"The physicians have come and gone and they say he will get well. He will not get well."

A hand suddenly appeared. It projected just far enough for Keene to discern it as far as the wrist and forearm; the rest was hidden by the edge of the cabinet in which he was confined. The hand held a small green vial, and drops of a fluid fell rapidly into a tumbler on the table at the bedside. Then the hand was withdrawn, and the whisper came again:

"That he will drink with his next medicine. Here comes the nurse!"

The voice died away, and Keene heard a rapid movement as of some one hastily escaping. The next moment Mrs. Stone came into the room, and bent over the restless figure of Eastwood.

"Nurse is mixing a broth for you, my boy," she whispered motheringly. "It's time to take your medicine now, and I've come to give it to you."

Silently she moved across the room and lifted a bottle, pausing to study its directions carefully. Then she poured out some into a spoon and emptied it into the tumbler. Keene gave one glance at Marian. Her eyes were wide with an emotion that was convulsing her entire body. She was about to behold her lover poisoned! And she could not make a move to save him!

Keene squirmed until his wrists bled in an effort to escape his bonds. His soul writhed and stormed in its utter helplessness. If he could make but a single sign; if he could move hand or foot, or make one outcry, he might save Eastwood from his fate. But he was bound so firmly he could not stir an inch; strain and struggle as he did with every ounce of strength left in his body, he could not move.

At that moment the ultimate pitch of horror came. On the wall above the bed there was a patch of warm sunlight. In its very heart there came now an ugly, venomous thing—the fatal seventh shadow that had crept to the wall at last. At the very heart of the sunshine it appeared; the cadaverous image of a human skull.

There it grinned at them both. The seventh shadow, with the cup of poison in the hands of the crooning old woman, and Jack Eastwood's parched lips parted to receive the fatal draught.

Something cold touched Keene's hand just then. There was the feel of metal, and of something that cut sharp and swift. A knife in the hands of some one unseen was severing his bonds; they dropped from his hands, and then from his feet. With an inarticulate cry the detective rose and staggered out of the cabinet. He reeled forward toward the bed and raised his hand just in time to dash the untasted cup of poison to the floor.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SINS AND SHADOWS

WHEN Blake confronted the deserted library, with the smell of an anesthetic heavy in the air, he knew immediately what had happened. Subconsciously he had feared it from the beginning. And something very close to a quiver of pain flickered across the stolid face of the young assistant. The long series of shadowy disasters that had culminated in his master's disappearance had torn away his mask in that brief moment and revealed him for what he really was—a man with a human heart who worshipped Gordon Keene.

But Blake's training had been too severe to allow such a temporary weakness to influence his course of action. It seemed merely to accelerate it. Blake's present business was not to mourn his master, but to find him. And knowing the class of criminals arrayed against him, Blake knew that the quicker he acted, the better it would be for Keene and all others concerned.

He set about his task, however, with a deliberateness that might have passed for slowness, if one did not understand the man. He examined the room carefully. Having learned nothing from this examination, he went to the book-case and threw back the curtains. One touch of his finger on one of the panel knobs served to cause an entire section of the books to swing back, ponderously but noiselessly, revealing a winding corridor. This was the secret passageway which Keene had constructed between his laboratory and his library; it greatly facilitated his work in having Blake overhear conversations with clients and in other delicate matters connected with the profession.

Blake sank immediately to his knees and crawled forward, his head bent nearly to the floor. And the assistant knew exactly what he was looking for. In the years that he had been associated with Keene, there had been an agreement between them what each would do in many different situations which they had foreseen. The abduction of one or the other had naturally been looked upon as a possibility at some time or another. And they had had an understanding that, in such a case, a trail would be left behind. It was for that trail that Blake was looking now.

He had scant hopes of finding it. By the smell of the ether in the air he knew that an attempt had been made to render the investigator unconscious. Could Keene have struggled hard enough to make the trail possible, to insure it, before he succumbed to the anesthetic? On that Blake was pinning his hope now.

Suddenly he was halted by something small and round and red that caught his eye. With a low exclamation he bent down closer and studied it. There was not a single doubt of what he saw. It was a small blot of crimson; a drop of human blood. He had found the trail!

For Keene and Blake had agreed to wear finger rings, with one prong in the setting always raised. That prong might prove their deliverance. For, in such an emergency it could be driven home in a finger hard enough to draw a flow of blood. Here was the blood-drop now. Blake scurried forward on his knees looking for another. One! Two! Three! They stretched away through the mazes of this corridor, losing themselves at the door of the laboratory, with which the secret passageway communicated. By pressing the knob of this laboratory door Blake was enabled to appear suddenly and dramatically before Chief Burkehart, who, with Annette Desiré and several deputies, was waiting for Keene.

"Humph!" growled Burkehart when he had gotten over his first surprise at seeing Blake appear in such an unexpected fashion, "you've got all the outfit, even to secret hallways, in this joint, haven't you? I've always said Keene was a model for all those story-book sleuths anyway. Well, where is he now, and why don't he show up? What's he got up his sleeve?"

"Mr. Keene is gone," replied Blake, soberly. "I can't find him!"

"What?"

Burkehart fairly bellowed the word in his rage. He jumped up and shook his fist in Blake's face.

"Do you mean to tell me I've been bamboozled by that interfering meddler?" he roared. "What do you suppose I'm doing anyway? I was a big ass to think he knew anything. He thought he had some fancy case, and now that it's fallen down he's skipped out. If I get hold of him, why, I'll——"

"Mr. Burkehart!"

Blake's voice was suddenly harsh and commanding. He pointed dramatically to the marble floor, where drop after drop of scarlet showed the continuation of the trail Blake had followed.

"That," said the assistant, earnestly, "will lead us to him. You wait here—let me follow it alone, will you?"

"Go ahead," snapped Burkehart, in disgust. "This is a devil of a mess, I say."

Up the rear stairs crept Blake, sometimes halting when the trail grew dim, but always eager, always confident, until at last he stood before the curtained entrance where the blood-drops ended. He threw the curtains aside.

He had come to the valet's entrance to Keene's bed-room. It had not been used in years, and now the Chinese cabinet of which Keene was so proud stood against it. But a whole panel had been torn away from the cabinet, and he could see right into it. He saw Keene straining at his bonds, and Marian Dale in a state of utter collapse. It did not take Blake a second to whip out his knife and cut those cords. He climbed through and followed Keene as the detective knocked away the cup from the hands of the astonished Mrs. Stone. Then the detective turned, his face radiant again, and shook the hand of his faithful ally.

"Blake," he said, "you're in like a man at the finish."

"You mean by that——" said Blake.

"I mean by that everything is ready. I have solved the mystery of the seven shadows!"

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE ACCUSING FINGER

TEN minutes later the group in Keene's laboratory was complete. Arranged in a kind of semi-circle before him, there sat Marian Dale, Chief Burkehart, Annette Desiré, Blake and Mrs. Stone. The detective stood, facing them, a cigarette in his lips, his hands in his pocket, an easy and nonchalant air upon him that belied the fierce emotions that surged through him.

"Before I place the handcuffs on the guilty," he began abruptly, "I shall tear away the veil of mystery that has shrouded this bizarre series of events and show you the true inwardness of the deception. We have been grappling with a most unusual problem because it involved not only murder, but an organized system of terrorization as well. In this deliberate principle of throwing horror upon horror in the path of Miss Dale, there has been revealed an imagination and a mentality of most extraordinary caliber; a calculating intelligence beyond anything I have ever encountered. I will tell you the motive that brought that fearful capacity for evil into action.

"The motive was hatred and revenge. It was a motive that would not be satisfied with mere, swift death. It demanded slow agony for its abominable appetite. And it knew that the gradual increase of hidden, unknown horror is the greatest torture the human mind can undergo. That—without revealing to you the main-spring of the plot as yet—was the reason for these inhuman attacks on Miss Dale.

"In working out the case I found an underlying characteristic at the start. It was that one person had been present in the earlier stages at every manifestation. And it did not take me long to believe that this young woman here"—he pointed at the trembling, defiant Desiré girl—"was implicated. By stealing upon the fire escape, by hiding in rooms, by seizing countless opportunities given her, she was able to produce some extraordinary effects.

"But almost in the same breath I realized there was some one else behind Annette Desiré. Hers was never the mind that conceived this thing. Already I had discarded the rejected suitor idea, because it did not fit in with any of the facts in the case. I felt sure it was Annette Desiré who produced that dog shadow, and who, on the next day, poisoned the dog itself. I felt sure she made the figure of a highwayman. And I feel equally sure that she, or her superior, hired the thug who attacked Miss Dale the very next day. But easy as that was to reason, there came a stumbling-block.

"Marian Dale was brought here after midnight by the late Professor Rust. She had just seen the shadow of a reptile. Annette Desiré might have made that shadow, it is true. But could she have carried the snake into my house, inasmuch as she was not with Miss Dale, but had remained behind in the apartment? At first I suspected Rust himself, principally because he had a suspicious traveling-bag whenever he traveled, and in his fluster at receiving Miss Dale at such an hour, he evidently picked up his empty bag and carried it with him, quite unthinking. I did not have long to suspect the poor man before he was killed.

"How, then, had the snake been carried to my house? I know now what I was forced to reason then. But my assumption was based on a foundation fact which was true. It had been planned that the snake attack Miss Dale in her apartment. Miss Dale had left her apartment. What more natural, then, that her enemy follow and see that the shadowed prophecy was not discredited?

"I was then forced to conclude that the agency at work in Miss Dale's apartment had means of access into my own house. The mysterious telephone call to Eastwood to hurry here confirmed that suspicion. There was some one at work in my own house, who was firing shots, hurling daggers, and casting shadows.

"Now, the only way to look at a problem like that is a commonsense way. Before assuming some devious and complicated explanation, I worked to find a simple one. And the first thing I did was to ask myself: Who was near each time the shadows appeared? If I could find some one who was always near at that time, I would have a basis to work on.

"I found some one. Amazed and incredulous as I was at the beginning, the evidence began to accumulate as I considered it. Each fresh step pointed nearer to the truth. When Blake gave me the history of Miss Dale's parents, the whole thing became clear as day to me.

"By this time I was evidently considered a dangerous man by my antagonists, and so was slated for the fate which had already befallen Professor Rust, and which was threatening Jack Eastwood. When I was left alone in my darkened library, a light appeared on my wall and in it a shadow. I turned quick as lightning, but before I could see what had happened an ether basket was over my nose. But I had seen enough, then, to answer my last question. I knew then how the shadows were made.

"From the very first I had suspected a feminine hand in the entire business. 'Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned' is an old but a true expression. No man could be as cruel as a woman when she has turned her heart to ice and sets out to wreak revenge. This plot had all the earmarks of a woman at work. And the note, with the words 'Dawn is on the hilltops' had the ring of a woman about it. This was merely an impression, but events showed that I was right.

"I had at first hoped to glean something about those shadows by studying the movements of the moon, in connection with the floor-plan of the Dale apartment. As the moon moved across a room, it might produce a shadow which, as it moved farther away, would vanish. But that was merely a false trail, which led nowhere. The explanation was even simpler than that.

"The murder of Philemon Rust was, in the beginning, deeply puzzling, but as I got on the ground, with the background of my theory already sketched, it did not seem so mysterious. I felt sure Annette Desiré had been to my house to carry that snake, soon after Marian had departed. The information I got at the apartment house confirmed the fact that she had been out. What then had followed? Suppose that Annette was then advised to return home at once? As she nears her apartment she sees a light on her floor. Some one is there! As a conspirator she is afraid. She has a ladder ready for emergencies in the court-yard, and she puts it to use. The ladder and the fire escape stairs show her footsteps. She mounted the ladder and crouched at the window. She saw Philemon Rust, with a certain object in his hand!"

He faced the cowering Annette and fixed her with his gaze.

"You know what that object was!" he cried. "It disappeared, and you could not find it. As you struggled with him, as you slew him with your dagger, he threw it from him, and you could not find it. But I found it. It had fallen behind a picture. You should have been more careful. And that object which Professor Rust had sought for, and found at the cost of his life, will be the decisive factor in this case."

A low sob was the only answer from Annette.

"With Rust dead at her feet, Annette probably became panic-stricken," went on Keene. "She sought desperately for the missing object she treasured so highly, but it had gone. Then, giving it up, she got out on the fire escape again and hurried back to this house. She came to her secret friend here, to ask guidance and advice. And acting on this advice, she returned, complaining to the clerk she had lost her key. This was a deliberate invention; I had Blake search and he found the key in her pocketbook. But her purpose was accomplished; the clerk went upstairs with her; he opened the door; he found the body, and thus gave her the alibi she needed.

"With pictures which Blake found in the family papers in your apartment, Miss Dale—you must forgive us for that, because it was necessary—and with papers from the same place, which told us much of the unhappy family history, I was soon able to patch the story together. I am now able to put the facts plainly before you.

"Annette Desiré was your father's daughter, Miss Dale. She became your maid because this thing had been plotted years before; she came to you eagerly at a time when maids were hard to secure, and you wondered at it. She hated you. And her guiding counsellor was her embittered, envenomed mother, who stands there beside her now; the woman who has conceived and brought about all this carnival of terror!"

The detective pointed a finger at the woman he accused; a gray-haired, old woman, whose blazing eyes now belied the meekness of her countenance. It was Mrs. Stone!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY

A GASP of amazement came from them all. Annette Desiré fell forward, sobbing weakly. But her white-faced mother confronted them all, unafraid:

"I did it all," she said, in a low, intense tone. "It is true. I did it, and I'm glad I did it, and I wish I could do it over and over again. Why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't his daughter suffer as he had made me and mine suffer? I was his proper mate, his promised wife, but he threw me over because I was an actress, and married another. I swore I'd get even, and I've done it—for though that Dale girl isn't dead, she's known torment since I've put the shadows over her life.

"You're a clever man, Mr. Keene," she continued, facing the detective. "I admire the way in which you set out to solve the case. I came to work under you at the same time Annette went with the Dale girl, and I did it after the most careful analysis and a knowledge of the intimacy that existed between old man Rust and yourself. I knew that when our long-hatched plan began he would turn to you. So I was here, ready, when he did that very thing. You see, I looked ahead at everything.

"And you have deduced very nearly everything right, Mr. Keene. It is true that I handled the phenomena here, while my daughter did it at the other house. It was I who sent the snake stealing through the door at you; it was Annette who smeared the Dale girl's clothes with thorn root. It was I who, leaving Blake with Marian Dale in the laboratory, stole through the secret corridor, threw a dagger at you, after you had seen the dagger shadow. I did not mean to kill you. But if the terrorism we practiced to intimidate the soul was to succeed, it must never miss. If we had a dagger shadow, the dagger must appear. And it did, you see!"

She spoke with the most unmoved manner, as if she were discussing the subject of household groceries. Her coolness was appalling.

"And it was I," she added, "who made the poison shadow on the wall in the Dale apartment this morning. You remember that I appeared a moment later with the news that Eastwood had been poisoned and Marian Dale gone. I could have telephoned, of course, but I knew Annette was in the hands of the police by that time, and I just had to be near her."

Here Mrs. Stone paused for the first and only time during her remarkable narrative. But she soon regained her strength and proceeded:

"All our plans had been worked out well, and yet, somehow, they missed. We wanted more than anything else that Jack Eastwood die before her eyes. Then we would know she was feeling some of the pangs we ourselves had felt. So I telephoned for Eastwood to come. Then, as Annette stole from the house, she fired a shot at him, and she can shoot the date from a ten-cent piece—yet she missed. It seemed as if Fate were moving against us. I cannot see why!"

The calm indignation of the woman was bewildering. Chills ran down the backs of those who heard her narrative; its facts so terrible, its telling so unmoved.

"I have no regrets," she finished calmly. "Except that Eastwood will get well and Marian Dale does not die."

A gasp came from Chief Burkehart. In all his years' experience in the police department he had never met a criminal of this type before. He rose to arrest her.

"Just a moment," interposed Keene. "There are two points yet to clear up, and we may as well finish the work now. The candles which helped produce the shadow were placed on the bureau by Annette from her position on the fire escape, on which she had crept around from her own room. Her thumb-prints are plain in the wax. They were lighted by affixing metallic potassium flakes to their wicks and spraying water on them, see!"

He turned to the three crimson candles on the table beside him, and dipping his hand in a saucer of water sprinkled them freely. Each candle-wick sputtered and blazed into light.

"A simple laboratory experiment," explained Dale. "Almost as simple as—the shadows themselves!"

He lifted an object from the table and held it before him.

"This," he said, "is what Professor Rust had found when Annette discovered him."

It was a small pocket flash-light and over its lense had been stuck a tiny paper silhouette of a highwayman holding out a revolver. Pointing the flashlight at the wall opposite, Keene touched the little knob and instantly a circle of light appeared on the wall, and in its center the figure of a highwayman.

"Note how small it is," said, easily. "It was done so for a reason."

With a sudden, quick movement, he dashed at Mrs. Stone, and before she could struggle free from his clasp, he had released the fastenings of her high-puffed gray hair, and it fell behind her. As it cascaded down, he snatched something that gleamed dully in the center of her hair.

"There is where the apparatus was concealed," he said, triumphantly. "And this will complete our evidence. By innocently touching her hair, as if to rearrange a stray strand, she could press that button, flash on the shadow, and before she could struggle free from his clasp, he had where it came, she had turned it off again. The whole thing was hidden in her hair, and to make a new shadow, one had only to cut out the figure in paper, tear off the old one and stick the new one on the face of the lens."

Mrs. Stone smiled at him bitterly.

"Yes," she said, "but it sent chills to the soul of all who saw it."

A silence fell upon them all. Mrs. Stone began mechanically to rearrange her tresses. At last Keene spoke.

"Mrs. Stone," he said, "you are a splendid example of high intellectuality ruined by evil emotions. You, nor your daughter, will ever be punished for what you have done. You will be sent to the asylums."

Again Mrs. Stone smiled her bitter smile.

"We have counted on that," she said, haughtily.

Then Burkehart and his men led mother and daughter away.

Two hours later Jack Eastwood opened his eyes. He was very weak, and he lay very still. Bending over him, her cool hands soothing his brow, her lips close to his cheeks, was a wan-faced but happy girl. He saw her and he smiled. And she smiled back at him, oh, so joyously.

"Jack!" she whispered, "the shadows have gone from our lives forever. The sunshine will aways be with us now, dear Jack. Oh, it's wonderful! Wonderful!"

And Gordon Keene, who stood in the doorway, and who, by the way, is a confirmed bachelor, thought it was wonderful, too.

READ THIS

To get our readers into closer touch with each other we intend to start a department for their exclusive benefit, entitled:

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The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

NO.
1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown
2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty
3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry
4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton
5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriott
6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall
7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask
8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode
9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, By William Hamilton Osborne
10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen
11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robert C. Brown
12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, by Charles F. Oursler
13 UNDER A MASK, by Critenden Marriott
14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall
15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard
16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, by Charles F. Oursler
17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by R. Ingalls
18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper
19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton
20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler
21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert

NO.
22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne
23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith
24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh
25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon
26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, by Pauline C. Bouve.
27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter
28 THE EVIL EYE, by Chas. F. Oursler
29 THE THIRTEENTH DOOR, by Edith Sessions Tupper
30 THE GAME OF DETECTIVE CAREW, by L. Jerome
31 LAW-MAKER AND LAW-BREAKER, by Beulah Poynter
32 THE COUNTERFEIT HEIRESS, by Inspector John Harrigan
33 TRACKED TO CHINA, by Chief Roger O'Brien
34 AFTER THE GERMAN SPIES, by May Halsey Miller
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36 TRAILED BY A FRENCH DETECTIVE, by Rene Renaud
37 A DROP OF INK, by Lieutenant Robert W. Warden
38 THE TEN DOCTORS, by Allan Arnold Fox
39 THE STAIN ON PAGE 61, by Chas. T. Jordan
40 A MASKED MYSTERY, by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 THE BLACK SOUL, by Beulah Poynter.
42 SANCTUARY, by William Hamilton Osborne.

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FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d St., New York.

CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS

By A CENTRAL OFFICE DETECTIVE

LAST summer I was engaged in the investigation of a remarkable case of burglary, accompanied by homicide, which had just occurred at the residence of Mr. Bagshaw, a gentleman of great wealth, who was situated within a few miles of Kendaldale. The particulars forwarded to the municipal police authorities by the local magistrate were chiefly these:

Mr. Bagshaw, who had been absent at Boston, wrote to Sarah King, a young woman left in charge of house and property, to announce his own speedy return. At the same time he directed her to have a particular bedroom aired, and other household matters arranged, for the reception of his nephew, Robert Bristow, who, having just arrived from abroad, would, he expected, leave New York immediately for Five Oaks' House. The arrival of this nephew had been declared to several tradesmen of Kendaldale by Miss King early in the day preceding the night of the murder and robbery; and by her directions meat, poultry, fish, and so on, had been sent by them to Five Oaks for his use. The lad who carried the fish home stated that he had seen a strange young gentleman in one of the sitting-rooms on the groundfloor through the half-opened door of the apartment.

On the following morning it was discovered that Five Oaks' House had been, not indeed broken into, but broken out of—this was evident from the state of the door fastenings—and Sarah King was murdered. The neighbors found her lying quite dead at the foot of the staircase, clothed only in her night-gown and stockings, and with a candle-stick tightly grasped in her right hand. It was conjectured that she had been roused from sleep by some noise below, and, having descended to ascertain the cause, had been mercilessly slain by the disturbed burglars. Mr. Bagshaw arrived on the following day, and it was then found that not only a large amount of silverware but between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars in gold and bonds—the produce of government stock, sold out about two months previously—had been carried off. The only person, except his niece, who lived with him, who knew this sum was in the house, was his nephew, Robert Bristow, to whom he had written, directing his letter to the Hummums Hotel, New York. It stated that the sum for the long-contemplated purchase of an estate called Rylands had been some time lying idle at Five Oaks, as he had wished to consult Robert upon his bargain before finally concluding it.

Bristow was now nowhere to be seen or heard of; and what seemed to confirm beyond a doubt the—to Mr. Bagshaw and his niece—torturing, horrifying suspicion that his nephew was the burglar and assassin, a portion of the identical letter written to him by his uncle was found in one of the offices. As he was nowhere to be met with or heard of in the neighborhood of Kendaldale it was surmised that he must have returned to New York with his booty; and a full description of his person, and the dress he wore, as given by the fish dealer's boy, was sent to New York by the authorities. They also forwarded for our use and assistance one Josiah Barnes, a sly, sharp, vagabond-sort of a fellow, who had been apprehended on suspicion, chiefly because of his former intimacy with the unfortunate Sarah King, who had discarded him, it seemed, on account of his incorrigibly idle and disreputable habits. The alibi he set up was, however, so clear and decisive, that he was but a few hours in custody; and he now exhibited great zeal for the discovery of the murderer of the woman to whom he had, to the extent of his perverted instincts, been sincerely attached. He played the violin at the picnics of the Kendaldale people; sang, tumbled, ventriloquized at their barroom orgies; and had he not been so very highly gifted, might have earned a decent living as a carpenter.

His principal use to us was, that he was acquainted with the features of Robert Bristow; and, accordingly, as soon as I had received my commission and instructions, I started off with him to the Hummums Hotel, New York. In answer to my inquiries, it was stated that Robert Bristow had left the hotel a week previously without settling his bill—which was, however, of very small amount, as he usually paid every evening—and had not since been heard of; neither had he taken his baggage with him. This was odd, though the period stated would have given him ample time to reach Kendaldale on the day it was stated he had arrived there.

"What suit did he wear when he left?"

"That which he usually wore; a golf cap, a blue coat, light trousers, and patent-leather shoes."

The precise clothing described by the fishdealer's errand-boy. We next proceeded to the Bank of America, to ascertain if any of the stolen bonds had been presented for payment. I handed in a list of the numbers furnished by Mr. Bagshaw, and was politely informed that they had all been cashed the day before by a gentleman in a blue coat, and wearing a golf cap. Lieutenant James was the name indorsed upon them; and the address, Washington Square, was of course a fictitious one. The cashier doubted if he should be able to swear to the identity of the gentleman who sold the bonds, but he had particularly noticed his clothes. I returned to the central office to report no progress; and it was then determined to issue hand-bills descriptive of Bristow's person, and offering a considerable reward for his apprehension, or such information as might lead to it. But the order had scarcely been issued, when who should we see walking deliberately toward the office but Robert Bristow himself, dressed precisely as before described!

I had just time to caution the Inspector not to betray any suspicion, but to hear his story, and let him quietly depart, and to slip with Josiah Barnes out of sight, when he entered, and made a formal but most confused complaint of having been robbed something more than a week previously—where or by whom he did not know—and afterwards deceived, bamboozled, and led astray in his pursuit of the robbers, by a person whom he now suspected to be a confederate with them. Even of this latter personage he could afford no tangible information; and the Inspector, having quietly listened to his statement—intended, doubtless, as a mystification—told him the police should make inquiries, and wished him good-morning. As soon as he turned out of headquarters, I was upon his track. He

walked slowly on, but without pausing, till he reached the Grand Central Station, where, to my great astonishment, he booked himself for Kendaldale by the night express. He then walked into a cafe, and seating himself in the grill room, called for a bottle of sherry wine and some sandwiches. He was now safe for a short period, at any rate; and I was about to take a turn in the street, just to meditate upon the most advisable course of action, when I espied three bold-faced looking fellows—one of whom I thought I recognized, spite of his fine dress—enter the railroad depot.

Naturally anxious, I approached as closely to the door as I could without being observed, and heard one of them ask the clerk if there were any vacant places in the night-express to Kendaldale. Why, what in the name of Mercury could a detachment of the swell-mob be wanting in that country of furze and friezecoats? The next sentence uttered by my friend, as he placed the money for booking three sleeping berths to Kendaldale on the counter, was equally, or perhaps more puzzling: "Is the gentleman who entered the office just now—him with a golf-cap, I mean—to be our fellow-passenger?"

"Yes, he has booked himself; and has, I think, since gone into the depot waiting-room."

"Thank you; good-morning."

I had barely time to slip aside into one of the passages, when the three gentlemen came out of the office, passed me, and swaggered out of the place. Vague undefined suspicions at once beset me relative to the connection of these worthies with the "golf-cap" and the doings at Kendaldale. There was evidently something in all this more than natural, if police philosophy could but find it out. I resolved, at all events, to try; and in order to have a chance of doing so, I determined to be of the party, not doubting that I should be able, in some way or other, to make one in whatever game they intended playing. I in my turn entered the booking-office, and finding there were still two places vacant, secured them both for James Jenkins and Josiah Barnes, countrymen and friends of mine.

I returned to the grill-room, where Mr. Bristow was still seated, apparently in deep and anxious meditation, and wrote a note, with which I dispatched the porter. I had now ample leisure for observing the suspected burglar and assassin. He was a pale, intellectual-looking, and withal handsome young man, of about six-and-twenty years of age, of slight but well-knit frame, and with the decided air—travel-stained, and jaded as he appeared—of a gentleman. His look was troubled and careworn, but I sought in vain for any indication of the starting, nervous tremor always in my experience exhibited by even old practitioners in crime when suddenly accosted. Several persons had entered the room hastily, without causing him even to look up. I determined to try an experiment on his nerves, which I was quite satisfied no man who had recently committed a murder could endure without wincing. My object was not to procure evidence producible in a court of law by such means, but to satisfy my own mind. I felt a growing conviction that, spite of appearances, the young man was guiltless of the deed imputed to him, and might be the victim, either of some strange combination of circumstances, or, more likely, of a diabolical plot for his destruction, essential, possibly, to the safety of the real perpetrators of the crime. Very probably—so ran my suspicions—friends and acquaintances of the three gentlemen who were to be our fellow-travelers.

My duty, I knew, was quite as much the vindication of innocence as the detection of guilt; and if I could satisfy myself that he was not the guilty party, no effort of mine should be wanting, I determined to extricate him from the perilious position in which he stood. I went out of the grill-room, and remained absent for some time; then suddenly entered with a sort of bounce, walked swiftly, and with a determined air, straight up to the stall where he was seated, grasped him tightly by the arm, and exclaimed roughly:

"So I have found you at last!" There was no start, no indication of fear whatever—not the slightest; the expression of his countenance, as he peevishly replied: "What the devil do you mean?" was simply one of surprise and annoyance.

"I beg your pardon," I replied; "the waiter told me a friend of mine, one Bagshaw, who has given me the slip, was here, and I mistook you for him."

He courteously accepted my apology, quietly remarking at the same time that though his own name was Bristow, he had, oddly enough, an uncle in the country of the same name as the person I had mistaken him for. Surely, thought I, this man is guiltless of the crime imputed to him; and yet—— At this moment the porter entered to announce the arrival of the gentleman I had sent for. I went out; and after giving the newcomer instructions not to lose sight of Mr. Bristow, hastened home to make arrangements for the journey.

Transformed, by the aid of a flaxen wig, broad-brimmed hat, green spectacles, and a tweed suit, into a heavy and elderly well-to-do personage, I took my way with Josiah Barnes, to the Grand Central a few minutes previous to the time for starting. We found Mr. Bristow already seated; but the "three friends," I observed, were curiously looking on, desirous no doubt of ascertaining who were to be their fellow-passengers. My appearance and that of Barnes—who looked much more of a simpleton than he really was—quite reassured them, and in they jumped with confident alacrity. A few minutes afterwards away we started.

Only one or two incidents—apparently unimportant, but which I carefully noted down—occurred during the long, wearisome journey, till we stopped to dine at about thirty miles from Kendaldale, when I ascertained, from an overheard conversation of one of the three with the conductor, that they intended to get down at a way station more than six miles on this side of that place.

"Do you know the house they intend to stop at?" I inquired of my assistant, as soon as I got him out of sight and hearing.

"Quite well; it is within about two miles of Five Oaks' House."

"Indeed! Then you must stop there too. It is necessary I should go on to Kendaldale with Mr. Bristow; but you can remain and watch their proceedings."

"With all my heart."

"But what excuse can you make for remaining there, when they know you are booked for Kendaldale? Fellows of that stamp are keenly suspicious; and in order to be useful, you must be entirely unsuspected."

"Oh, leave that to me. I'll throw dust enough in their eyes to blind a hundred such as they."

"Well, we shall see. And now to dinner."

Josiah Barnes began drinking from a bottle which he drew from his pocket; and so potent must have been the spirit it contained, that he became rapidly intoxicated. Not only speech, but eyes, body, arms, legs, by the time we reached the station where we had agreed he should stop, were thoroughly, hopelessly drunk; and so savagely quarrelsome, too, did he become, that I expected every instant to hear my real vocation bawled out. Strange to say, utterly stupid and savage as he seemed, all dangerous

topics were carefully avoided. When the wrath stopped, he got out, and reeled and tumbled into a barroom, from which he declared he would not budge an inch till next day. Vainly did a brakeman remonstrate with him about his foolish obstinacy; he might as well have argued with a bear; and he at length determined to leave him to his drunken humor. I was out of patience with the fellow; and snatching an opportunity when the room was clear, began to upbraid him for his vexatious folly. He looked sharply around, and then, his body as evenly balanced, his eye as clear, his speech as free as my own, muttered in a low, exulting voice:

"Didn't I tell you I'd manage it nicely?" The door opened, and, in a twinkling, drunkenness, of both brain and limb, was again assumed with a perfection of acting I have never seen equaled. He had studied from nature, that was perfectly clear. I was quite satisfied, and with renewed confidence obeyed the conductor's call back to the train.

Mr. Bristow and I were now the only inside passengers, and as further disguise was useless, I began stripping myself of my superabundant clothing—wig, spectacles, etc. —and in a few minutes, with the help of a bundle I had with me, I presented to the astonished gaze of my fellow-traveler the identical person that had so rudely accosted him in the grill-room.

"Why, what in the name of all that's comical is the meaning of this?" demanded Mr. Bristow, laughing immoderately at my changed appearance.

I briefly and coolly informed him, and he was for some minutes overwhelmed with consternation and astonishment. He had not, he said, even heard of the catastrophe at his uncle's. Still, amazed and bewildered as he was, no sign which I could interpret into an indication of guilt escaped him.

"I do not want to obtrude upon your confidence, Mr. Bristow," I remarked, after a long pause, "but you must perceive that unless the circumstances I have related to you are in some way explained you stand in a perilous predicament."

"You are right," he replied, after some hesitation. "It is a tangled web; still I doubt not that some mode of vindicating my perfect innocence will present itself."

He again relapsed into silence, and neither of us spoke again until the train stopped, in accordance with a previous intimation I had given the conductor, opposite the gate of the Kendaldale prison. Mr. Bristow started and changed color; but instantly mastering his emotion, he calmly said:

"You, of course, but perform your duty; mine is not to distrust a just and all-seeing Providence."

We entered the jail, and the necessary search of his clothes and baggage was effected as forbearingly as possible. To my great dismay we found among the money in his purse a Spanish gold piece of a peculiar coinage, and in the lining of his grip, very dexterously hidden, a cross set with brilliants, both of which I knew, by the list forwarded to the New York police, formed part of the plunder carried off from Five Oaks' House. The prisoner's vehement protestations that he could not conceive how such articles came into his possession excited a derisive smile on the face of the veteran warden; while I was thoroughly dumfounded by the seemingly complete demolition of the theory of innocence I had woven out of his candid open manner and unshakable hardihood of nerve.

"I dare say the articles came to you in your sleep," sneered the warden, as we turned to leave the cell.

"Oh," I mechanically exclaimed, "in his sleep! I had not thought of that!" The man stared, but I had passed out of the prison before he could express his surprise or contempt in words.

The next morning the court-room was densely crowded, to hear the examination of the prisoner. There was also a very numerous attendance of lawyers; the case, from the position in life of the prisoner, and the strange and mysterious circumstances of the affair altogether, having excited an extraordinary and extremely painful interest among all classes in the town and neighborhood. The demeanor of the accused gentleman was anxious certainly, but withal calm and collected; and there was, I thought, a light of fortitude and conscious probity in his clear, bold eyes, which guilt never yet successfully simulated.

After hearing of some minor evidence, the fishdealer's boy was called, and asked if he could point out the person he had seen at Five Oaks on the day preceding the burglary? The lad looked fixedly at the prisoner for something more than a minute without speaking, and then said: "The gentleman was standing before the fire when I saw him, with his cap on; I should like to see this person with his cap on before I say anything." Mr. Bristow dashed on his golf-cap, and the boy immediately exclaimed, "That is the man!" Mr. Cowan, a lawyer, retained by Mr. Bagshaw for his nephew, objected that this was, after all, only swearing to a cap, or at best to the ensemble of a dress, and ought not to be admitted. The judge, however, decided that it must be taken *quantum valeat*, and in corroboration of other evidence. It was next deposed by several persons that the deceased Sarah King had told them that her employer's nephew had positively arrived at Five Oaks. An objection to the reception of this evidence, as partaking of the nature of "hearsay," was also made, and similarly overruled. Mr. Bristow begged to observe "that Sarah King was not one of his uncle's old servants, and was entirely unknown to him; it was quite possible, therefore, that he was personally unknown to her." The bench observed that all these observations might be fitly urged before a jury; but, in the present stage of the proceedings, were uselessly addressed to them, whose sole duty it was to ascertain if a sufficiently strong case of suspicion had been made out against the prisoner to justify his committal for trial. A constable next proved finding a portion of a letter, which he produced, in one of the offices of Five Oaks; and then Mr. Bagshaw was directed to be called in. The prisoner, upon hearing this order, exhibited great emotion, and earnestly entreated that his uncle and himself might be spared the necessity of meeting each other for the first time after a separation of several years under such circumstances.

"We can receive no evidence against you, Mr. Bristow, in your absence," replied the judge in a compassionate tone of voice; "but your uncle's deposition will occupy but a few minutes. It is, however, indispensable."

"At least, then, Mr. Cowan," said the agitated young man, "prevent my sister from accompanying her uncle; I could not bear that!"

He was assured she would not be present; in fact she had become seriously ill through anxiety and terror; and the crowded assemblage awaited in painful silence the approach of the reluctant prosecutor. He presently appeared, a venerable, white-haired man; seventy years old at least, his form bowed by age and grief, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his whole manner indicative of sorrow and dejection.

"Uncle!" cried the prisoner, springing toward him. The aged man looked up, seemed to read in the clear countenance of his nephew a full refutation of the suspicions entertained against him, tottered forward with outspread

arms, and, in the words of the sacred text, "fell upon his neck and wept," exclaiming in choking accents:

"Forgive me, forgive me, Robert, that I ever for a moment doubted you. Mary never did—never, Robert; not for an instant."

A profound silence prevailed during this outburst of feeling, and a considerable pause ensued before the clerk of the court, at a gesture from the judge, touched Mr. Bagshaw's arm and begged his attention to the bench.

"Certainly, certainly," said he, hastily wiping his eyes, and turning toward the court. "My sister's child, gentlemen," he added, appealingly, "who has lived with me from childhood; you will excuse me, I am sure."

"There needs no excuse, Mr. Bagshaw," said the magistrate kindly; "but it is necessary this unhappy business should be proceeded with. Hand the witness the portion of the letter found at Five Oaks. Is that your handwriting; and is it a portion of the letter you sent to your nephew, informing him of the large sums of money kept for a particular purpose at Five Oaks?"

"It is."

"Now," said the district attorney, addressing me, "please to produce the articles in your possession."

I laid the Spanish coin and the cross upon the table.

"Please to look at these two articles, Mr. Bagshaw," said the judge. "Now, sir, on your oath, are they a portion of the property of which you have been robbed?"

The aged gentleman stooped forward and examined them earnestly; and then turned and looked with quivering eyes, if I may be allowed the expression, in his nephew's face; but returned no answer to the question.

"It is necessary you should reply, yes or no, Mr. Bagshaw," said the district attorney.

"Answer, uncle," said the prisoner, soothingly; "do not fear for me. I shall yet break through the web in which I at present seem hopelessly involved."

"Bless you, Robert—bless you! I am sure you will. Yes, gentlemen, the cross and coin on the table are part of the property carried off."

A smothered groan, indicative of sorrowing sympathy felt for the venerable gentleman, arose from the crowded court on hearing this declaration. I then deposed to finding them as previously stated. As soon as I concluded, the magistrate, addressing the prisoner, said, "I have to inform you that sufficient evidence has been adduced against you to warrant committing you for trial. We are of course bound to hear anything you have to say; but such being our intention, your professional adviser will perhaps recommend you to reserve whatever defense you have to make for another tribunal; here it could not avail you."

Mr. Cowan expressed his concurrence in the intimation of the magistrate; but the prisoner vehemently protested against sanctioning by his silence the accusation preferred against him.

"I have nothing to reserve," he exclaimed, with passionate energy; "nothing to conceal. I will not own my acquittal of this foul charge to any trick of lawyercraft. If I may not come out of this investigation with an untainted name, I desire not to escape at all. The defense, or rather the suggestive facts, I have to offer for the consideration of the bench are these: On the evening of the day I received my uncle's letter I went to the Broadway Theater, and remained out very late. On my return to the hotel, I found I had been robbed of my pocket-book, which contained not only that letter, and a considerable sum in bank-notes, but papers of great professional importance to me. It was too late to adopt any measures for its recovery that night; and the next morning, as I was dressing myself to go out, in order to apprise the police authorities of my loss, I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me instantly on important business. He was shown up, and announced himself to be a detective; the robbery I had sustained had been revealed by an accomplice, and it was necessary I should immediately accompany him. We left the hotel together; and after consuming the entire day in perambulating all sorts of by-streets, and calling at several suspicious-looking places, my officious friend all at once discovered that the thieves had left town for Canada, hoping, doubtless, to reach a large town, and get gold for the bonds before news of their having been stopped should have reached it. He insisted upon immediate pursuit. I wished to return to the hotel for a change of clothes, as I was but lightly clad, and night-traveling required warmer apparel. This he would not hear of, as the night express was on the point of starting. He, however, contrived to supply me from his own resources with a coat and a cap. In due time we arrived at Philadelphia, where I was kept for several days loitering about; till finally, my guide decamped, and I returned to New York. An hour after arriving there, I gave information at police headquarters of what had happened, and afterwards bought a ticket for Kendaldale. This is all I have to say."

This strange story did not produce the slightest effect upon the bench, and very little upon the auditory, and yet I felt satisfied it was strictly true. It was not half ingenious enough for a made-up story. Mr. Bagshaw, I should have stated, had been led out of the justice hall immediately after he had finished his deposition.

"Then, Mr. Bristow," said the district attorney, "assuming this curious narrative to be correct, you will be easily able to prove an alibi?"

"I have thought over that," returned the prisoner mildly, "and must confess that, remembering how I was dressed and wrapped up—that I saw but few persons, and those casually and briefly—I have strong misgivings of my power to do so."

"This is perhaps the less to be lamented," replied the district attorney, in a sneering tone, "inasmuch as the possession of those articles," pointing to the cross and coin on the table, "would necessitate another equally probable though quite different story."

"That is a circumstance," replied the prisoner, in the same calm tone as before, "which I cannot in the slightest manner account for."

No more was said, and the order for his committal to the county jail at Appleby on the charge of "willful murder" was given to the clerk. At this moment a hastily scrawled note from Barnes was placed in my hands. I had no sooner glanced over it than I applied to the magistrate for an adjournment till the morrow, on the ground that I could then produce an important witness, whose evidence at the trial it was necessary to assure. The application, as a matter of course, was complied with; the prisoner was remanded till the next day, and the court adjourned.

As I accompanied Mr. Bristow to the vehicle in waiting to reconvey him to jail, I could not forbear whispering:

"Be of good heart, sir; we shall unravel this mystery yet, depend upon it."

He looked keenly at me, and then, without other reply than a warm pressure of the hand, jumped into an automobile.

"Well, Barnes," I exclaimed, as soon as we were in a room by ourselves, and the door closed, "what is it you have discovered?"

"That the murderers of Sarah King are yonder where you left me."

"Yes; so I gather from your note. But what evidence have you to support your assertion?"

"This! Trusting to my apparent drunken imbecility, they occasionally dropped words in my presence which convinced me not only that they were the guilty parties, but that they had come down here to carry off the silverware, somewhere concealed in the neighborhood. This they mean to do to-night."

"Anything more?"

"Yes. You know I am a ventriloquist in a small way, as well as a bit of a mimic; well, I took occasion when the youngest of the rascals, the one that sat beside Mr. Bristow, and got out on the observation platform the second evening, because, freezing cold as it was, he said the inside was too hot and close——"

"Oh, I remember. Dolt that I was, not to recall it before. But go on."

"Well, he and I were alone together in the hotel parlor about three hours ago—I dead tipsy as ever—when he suddenly heard the voice of Sarah King at his elbow exclaiming, 'Who is that in the silverware closet?' If you had seen the start of horror which he gave, the terror which shook his failing limbs as he glanced around the apartment, you would no longer have entertained a doubt about the matter."

"This is scarcely judicial proof, Barnes; but I dare say we shall be able to make something of it. You return immediately; about nightfall I will rejoin you in my former disguise."

It was early in the evening when I entered the Hotel Talbot and seated myself in the parlor. Our three friends were present, and so was Barnes.

"Is not that fellow sober yet?" I demanded of one of them.

"No; he has been lying about drinking and snoring ever since. He went to bed, I hear, this afternoon; but he appears to be little the better of it."

I had an opportunity soon afterwards of speaking to Barnes privately, and found that one of the fellows had brought a cart and horse from Kendaldale, and that all three were to depart in about an hour, under pretense of reaching a town about fourteen miles distant, where they intended to sleep. My plan was immediately taken: I returned to the parlor, and watching my opportunity, whispered into the ear of the young gentleman whose nerves had been so shaken by Barnes' ventriloquism, and who, by the way, was my old acquaintance—"Dick Staples, I want a word with you in the next room." I spoke in my natural voice, and lifted, for his special study and edification, the wig from my forehead. He was thunderstruck; and his teeth chattered with terror. His two companions were absorbed over a game at cards, and did not observe us. "Come," I continued in the same whisper, "there is not a moment to lose; if you would save yourself, follow me!" He did so, and I led him into an adjoining apartment, closed the door, and drawing a pistol from my coat-pocket, said: "You perceive, Staples, that the game is up; you personated Mr. Bristow at his uncle's at Five Oaks, dressed in a precisely similar suit of clothes to that which he wears. You murdered the servant——"

"No—no—no, not I," gasped the wretch, "not I; I did not strike her——"

"At all events, you were present, and that, as far as the electric chair is concerned, is the same thing. You also picked that gentleman's pocket during your journey from New York, and placed one of the stolen Spanish pieces in his purse; you then went on the observation platform, and by some ingenious means or other, contrived to secret a cross set with brilliants in his grip."

"What shall I do—what shall I do?" gasped the crook, half dead with fear, and slipping down on a chair; "what shall I do to save my life—my life?"

"First get up and listen. If you are not the actual murderer——"

"I am not—upon my soul I am not!"

"If you are not, you will probably be admitted state's evidence; though, mind, I make no promises. Now, what is the plan of operations for carrying off the booty?"

"They are going in the cart almost immediately to take it up; it is hidden in the copse yonder. I am to remain here, in order to give an alarm should any suspicion be excited, by showing two candles at our bedroom window; and if all keeps right, I am to join them at the cross-roads, about a quarter of a mile from here."

"All right. Now return to the parlor, I will follow you! and remember that, on the slightest hint of treachery, I will shoot you as I would a dog."

About a quarter of an hour afterwards his two confederates set off in the cart: I, Barnes and Staples cautiously followed, the latter handcuffed, and superintended by the hostler of the hotel, whom I pressed into the government's service. The night was pitch dark fortunately, and the noise of the cart-wheels effectually drowned the noise of our footsteps. At length the cart stopped; the men got out, and were soon busily engaged in transferring the buried swag to the cart. We cautiously approached, and were soon within a yard or two of them, still unperceived.

"Get into the cart," said one of them to the other, "and I will hand the things up to you." His companion obeyed.

"Hello!" cried the fellow, "I thought I told you——"

"That you are nabbed at last!" I exclaimed, tripping him up suddenly. "Barnes, hold the horse's head. Now, sir, attempt to budge an inch out of that cart, and I'll send a bullet through your brain."

The surprise was complete; and so terror-stricken were they, that neither resistance nor escape was attempted. They were soon handcuffed and otherwise secured; the remainder of the booty was placed in the cart; and we made the best of our way to Kendaldale jail, where I had the honor of lodging them at about nine o'clock in the evening. The news, late as it was, spread like wildfire, and innumerable were the congratulations which awaited me when I reached the hotel where I lodged. But that which recompensed me a thousand-fold for what I had done, was the fervent embrace in which the white-haired uncle, risen from his bed to assure himself of the truth of the news, gave me as he called down blessings from heaven upon my head. There are blessed moments even in the life of a police-officer.

Mr. Bristow was of course liberated on the following morning; Staples was admitted state's evidence; and one of his accomplices—the actual murderer—was electrocuted, the other went to Sing Sing.

PHRENOLOGY

CHARACTER reading at a glance is not only a diversion but a useful occupation. There are no hard and fast rules to be observed, but the following superficial studies will give you an insight into certain types:

Short Head—Imitativeness, little self-control. Wide Head—Energy, thoroughness, courage. Narrow Head—Superficiality, recklessness. High Head—Ambition, self-control, humor. Low Head—Little ambition, material desires. Long Head—Intellectuality, constructiveness.

X Y Z---A DETECTIVE STORY

By ROBERT DELACY McNUTT

THE following advertisement appeared in several of the New York journals in the year 1918:

"If Owen Lloyd, a native of Wales, and who, it is believed, resided for many years in New York, as a clerk in a large mercantile establishment, will forward his present address to X. Y. Z., General Delivery Post Office, New York, he will hear of something to his advantage."

My attention had been attracted to this notice by its frequent appearance in the journal which I was chiefly in the habit of reading; and, from my professional habits of thinking, I had set it down in my own mind as a trap for some offenders against the principles of *meum* and *tuum*, whose presence in a criminal court was very earnestly desired. I was confirmed in this conjecture by observing that, in despair of Owen Lloyd's voluntary disclosure of his retreat, a reward of $5, payable by a respectable lawyer, was ultimately offered to any person who would furnish X. Y. Z. with the missing man's address.

"An old bird," I mentally exclaimed, on perusing this paragraph, "and not to be caught with chaff; that is evident." Still more to excite my curiosity, and at the same time bring the matter within the scope of my own particular functions, I found, on taking up the *Police Gazette*, a reward of $800 offered for the apprehension of Owen Lloyd, whose person and manners were minutely described. "The pursuit grows hot," thought I, throwing down the paper, and hastening to attend a summons just brought me from the chief; "and if Owen Lloyd is still within the four seas, his chance of escape seems but a poor one."

On waiting on the chief, I was directed to put myself in immediate personal communication with a Mr. Smith, the head of an eminent wholesale house in the city.

"In the city!"

"Yes; but your business with Mr. Smith is relative to the extensive robbery at his Flatbush residence a week or two ago. The necessary warrants for the apprehension of the suspected parties have been, I understand, obtained, and on your return will, together with some necessary memoranda, be placed in your hands."

I at once proceeded to my destination, and on my arrival was immediately ushered into a dingy back room, where I was asked to wait till Mr. Smith, who was just then busily engaged, could speak to me. Casting my eyes over a table, near which the clerk had placed me a chair, I perceived a newspaper and the *Police Gazette*, in both of which the advertisements for the discovery of Owen Lloyd were strongly underlined. "Oh, ho," thought I; "Mr. Smith, then, is the X. Y. Z. who is so extremely anxious to renew his acquaintance with Owen Lloyd; and I am the honored individual selected to bring about the desired interview.

Mr. Smith did not keep me waiting long. He seemed a hard, shrewd, business man, whose still wiry frame, brisk, active gait and manner, and clear, decisive eye, indicated—though the snows of more than sixty winters had passed over his head—a yet vigorous life, of which the morning and the noon had been spent in the successful pursuit of wealth and its accompaniment—social consideration and influence.

"You have, I suppose, read the advertisements marked on these papers?"

"I have, and of course conclude that you, sir, are X. Y. Z."

"Of course not. Conclusions," rejoined Mr. Smith, with a quite preceptible sneer, "are usually very silly things; in this instance especially so. My name, you ought to be aware, is Smith; X. Y. Z., whoever he may be, I expect in a few minutes. In just seventeen minutes," added the exact man of business; "for I, by letter, appointed him to meet me here at one o'clock precisely. My motive in seeking an interview is the probability that he, like myself, is a sufferer by Owen Lloyd, and may not therefore object to defray a fair share of the cost likely to be incurred in unkenneling the delinquent, and prosecuting him to conviction; or, which would be far better, he may be in possession of information that will enable us to obtain completely the clue I already almost grasp. But we must be cautious; X. Y. Z. may be a relative or friend of Lloyd's, and in that case, to tell him of our plans would answer no purpose but to afford him an opportunity of baffling them. I had better proceed to read over to you a few particulars I have jotted down, which, you will perceive, throw light and color over the suspicions I have been within these few days compelled to entertain. You are doubtless acquainted with the full particulars of the robbery at my residence, in Rugby road, last Thursday fortnight?"

"Yes; especially the report of the officers, that the crime must have been committed by persons familiar with the premises and the general habits of the family."

"Precisely. Now have you your memorandum-book ready?"

"Quite so."

"You had better write with ink," said Mr. Smith, pushing an inkstand and pens toward me. "Important memoranda should never, where there is a possibility of avoiding it, be written in pencil. Friction, thumbing, use of any kind, often partially obliterates them, creating endless confusion and mistakes. Are you ready?"

"Perfectly."

"Owen Lloyd was a native of Wales. About five feet eight; but I need not describe his person over again. Many years with us, first as junior, then as head clerk; during which his conduct, as regards the firm, was exemplary. A man of yielding, irresolute mind—if, indeed, a person can be said to really possess a mind at all who is always changing it for some other person's—incapable of saying 'No' to embarrassing, impoverishing requests—one whom fools say are nobody's enemies but their own."

"I understand; but I really do not see how this bears upon——"

"The mission you are directed to undertake? I think it does, as you will presently see. Three years ago, Lloyd having involved himself, in consequence of the serious defect of character I have indicated, in large liabilities for pretended friends, left our employment, and to avoid a jail, fled, no one could discover where. Edward Jones, whose description, as well as that of his wife, you will receive from the superintendent, was discharged about

seven years ago from our service for misconduct, and went we understood, to Europe. He always appeared to possess great influence over the mind of Lloyd. Jones and his wife were seen three evenings since by one of our clerks near the Woolworth building. I am of opinion," continued Mr. Smith, removing his spectables, and closing the note-book, from which he had been reading, "that it is only the first step in criminal imprudence which feeble-minded men hesitate at; and I now more than suspect that, pressed by poverty, and very possibly yielding to the persuasions and example of Jones, who, by the way, was as well acquainted with the premises in Rugby Road as Owen Lloyd, is now a common thief and burglar."

"Indeed!"

"A more minute search led to the discovery, the day before yesterday, of a pocket-book behind some book-shelves in my library. As no property had been taken from that room—though the lock of a large iron chest, containing coins and medals, had been evidently tampered with—the search was not at first very rigorous. That pocket-book—here it is—belonged, I know, to Owen Lloyd when in our service. See, here are his initials stamped on cover."

"...t he not have inadvertently left it when calling on you?"

"You will scarcely think so after reading the date of a note from New Hampshire, which you will find within the inner lining."

"The date is 1919."

"Exactly. I have also strong reason for believing that Owen Lloyd is now, or has been lately, residing in some part of New Hampshire. He fled in 1918."

"That is important."

"The police commissioner informed me that you were a person upon whose good sense and discretion, as well as sagacity and courage, every confidence might be placed. I therefore feel less difficulty than I otherwise should in admitting you upon matters one would not willingly have bruited to the public ear."

I bowed, and he presently proceeded:

"Owen Lloyd, I should tell you, is married to a very amiable, superior sort of a woman, and has one child—a daughter named Caroline—an elegant, gentle-mannered, beautiful girl, I admit, to whom my wife was much attached, and she was consequently a frequent visitor in Flatbush. This I felt was very imprudent, and the result was that my son Arthur—only about two years her senior—formed a silly, boyish attachment for her. They have since, I gather from this letter, which I found yesterday in Arthur's dressing-room, carried on, at long intervals, a clandestine correspondence, waiting for the advent of more propitious times, which being interpreted," added Mr. Smith, with a sardonic sneer, "means, of course, my death and burial."

"You are in possession, then, if Caroline Lloyd is living with her father, of his precise place of abode?"

"Not exactly. The correspondence is, it seems, carried on without the knowledge of Lloyd; and the girl states, in answer, it should seem, to Arthur's inquiries, that her father would never forgive her if, under present circumstances, she disclosed his place of residence, and she entreats Arthur not to persist in his attempts to discover her. My son, you must understand, is now of age, and so far as fortune is concerned, is, thanks to a legacy from an aunt, independent of me."

"What post-mark does the letter bear?"

"Ridgewood, Brooklyn. Miss Lloyd states that it will be posted in Brooklyn by a friend; that friend being, I suppose, her father's confederate, Jones. But to us the most important part of the epistle is the following line: 'My father met with a sad accident in the forest some time ago, but is now quite recovered.' The words 'in the forest' have, you see, been written over, but not so entirely as to prevent their being traced. Now, coupling this expression with the New Hampshire clue, I am of opinion that Lloyd is concealed somewhere in Sunapee Forest."

"A shrewd guess, at all events."

"You now perceive what mighty motives I have to bring this man to justice. The property carried off I care little about; but the intercourse between the girl and my son must be terminated——"

He was interrupted by a clerk, who entered to say that Mr. William Lloyd, the gentleman who had advertised as "X. Y. Z.," desired to speak to him. Mr. Smith directed Mr. Lloyd to be shown in; and then, snatching up the *Police Gazette*, and thrusting it into one of the table-drawers, said in a low voice, but marked emphasis, "A relative, judging by the name; be silent and watchful."

A minute afterwards Mr. Lloyd was ushered into the room. He was a thin, emaciated, and apparently sorrow-stricken man, and on the wintry side of middle age, but of mild, courteous speech and manners. He was evidently nervous and agitated, and after a word or two of customary salutation, said hastily, "I gather from this note, sir, that you can afford me tidings of my brother Owen; where is he?" He looked eagerly around the apartment, gazed with curious earnestness in my face, and then again turned with tremulous anxiety to Mr. Smith. "Is he dead? Pray do not keep me in suspense."

"Sit down, sir," said Mr. Smith, pointing to a chair. "Your brother, Owen Lloyd, was for many years a clerk in this establishment."

"Was—was!" interrupted Mr. Lloyd, with greatly increasing agitation; "not now, then—he has left you?"

"For upwards of a year. A few days ago—pray do not interrupt me—I obtained intelligence of him, which, with such assistance as you may possibly be able to afford, will perhaps suffice to enable this gentleman"—pointing to me—"to discover his present residence."

"For what purpose, sir, are you instituting this eager search after my brother? It cannot be that—no, no—he left you, you say, more than a year; besides, the bare supposition is as wicked as absurd."

"The truth is, Mr. Lloyd," rejoined Mr. Smith, after a few moments' reflection, "there is great danger that my son may disadvantageously connect himself with your—with your brother's family—may, in fact, marry his daughter Caroline. Now I could easily convince Owen——"

"Caroline!" interjected Mr. Lloyd, with a tremulous accent. "Caroline!—truly, her daughter would be named Caroline." An instant after, he added, drawing himself up with an air of pride and some sternness: "Caroline Lloyd, sir, is a person who, by birth, character and attainments, is a fitting match for the son of the proudest merchant of this big city."

"Very likely," rejoined Mr. Smith dryly; "but you must excuse me for saying that, as regards my son, it is one which I will at any cost prevent."

"How am I to know," observed Mr. Lloyd, whose glance of pride had quickly passed away, "that you are dealing fairly and candidly with me in the matter?"

In reply to this home-thrust, Mr. Smith placed the letter, addressed by Miss Lloyd to his son, in the hands of the questioner, at the same time explaining how he had obtained it.

Mr. Lloyd's hands trembled, and he hurriedly perused it.

He seemed buried in thought for some time after the perusal of the letter; and Mr. Smith, whose cue it was to

avoid exciting suspicion by too great eagerness of speech, was growing fidgety. At length, suddenly looking up, Lloyd said in a dejected tone, "If this is all you have ascertained, we seem as far off as ever. I can afford you no help."

"I am not sure of that," replied Mr. Smith. "Let us look calmly at the matter. Your brother is evidently not living in New York, and that accounts for your advertisements not being answered."

"Truly."

"If you look at the letter attentively, you will perceive that three important words, 'in the forest,' have been partially erased."

"Yes, it is indeed so; but what——"

"Now, is there no particular locality in the country to which your brother would be likely to go in preference to another? Gentlemen of fancy and sentiment," added Mr. Smith, "usually fall back, I have heard, upon some favorite haunt of early days when pressed by adversity."

"It is natural they should," replied Mr. Lloyd, heedless of the sneer. "I have felt that longing for old haunts and old faces in intense force, even when I was what the world calls prospering in strange lands. But no; he would not return to Wales—to Caermarthen—to be looked down upon by those among whom our family for so many generations stood equal with the highest. Besides, I have personally sought him there in vain."

"But his wife—she is not a native of that country?"

"No. Caroline Heyworth is a native of Beaulieu, a village in the Sunapee Forest, New Hampshire. A small, very small property there, bequeathed by an uncle, belonged to her, and perhaps has not been disposed of. How came I not to think of this before? I will set out at once—and yet pressing business requires my stay here for a day or two."

"This gentleman can proceed to Beaulieu immediately."

"That must do then. You will call on me, sir—here is my address—before you leave town. Thank you. And God bless you, sir," he added, suddenly seizing Mr. Smith's hand, "for the light you have thrown upon this wearying and, I feared, hopeless search. You need not be so anxious, sir, to send a special messenger to release your son from his promise of marriage to my niece. None of us, be assured, will be desirous of forcing her upon a reluctant family.' He then bowed and withdrew.

"See here," said Mr. Smith, with a good deal of sternness, as soon as we were alone, "I expect that no sentimental crotchet will prevent your doing your duty in this matter?"

"What right," I answered with some heat, "have you to make such an insinuation?"

"Because I perceived by your manner that you disapproved of my questioning Mr. Lloyd as to the likeliest mode of securing his brother."

"My manner interpreted my thoughts; still, sir, I know my duty, and shall perform it."

"Enough; I have nothing more to say."

I drew on my gloves, took up my hat, and was leaving the room, when Mr. Smith exclaimed: "Stay one moment; you see that my great object is to break off the connection between my son and Miss Lloyd?"

"I do."

"I am not anxious to press the prosecution if, by a frank written confession of his guilt, Owen Lloyd places an insuperable bar between his child and mine. You understand?"

"Perfectly. But permit me to observe that the duty you just now hinted I might hesitate to perform will not permit me to be a party to any such transaction. Good-day."

I waited on William Lloyd soon afterwards, and listened with painful interest to the brief history which he, with child-like simplicity, narrated of his own and brother's fortunes. They had been early left orphans; and, deprived of judicious guidance, had run a wild career of dissipation, till all was gone. Just before the crash came, they had emigrated and both fallen in love with the same woman, Caroline Heyworth, who had preferred the meeker, more gentle-hearted Owen, to his elder brother. They parted in anger. William obtained a situation as manager of an estate in Jamaica, L. I., where, by many years of toil, good fortune, and economy, he at length ruined his health and restored his fortunes; and he was now returning to die rich in his native country. I promised to write immediately I had seen his brother; and with a sorrowful heart took leave of the prematurely aged man.

I arrived in New England by the night-train, and was informed that the best mode of reaching Beaulieu was by crossing the river to the village of Fords Corners. As soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to the pier, and was soon speeding across the tranquil waters. My attention was soon arrested by two figures in the stern of the boat, a man and woman.

A slight examination of their features sufficed to convince me that they were Jones and his wife. They evidently entertained no suspicion of pursuit; and as I heard them tell the boatman they were going on to Beaulieu, I determined for the present not to disturb their fancied security. It was fortunate I did so. As soon as we had landed, they passed into a mean-looking dwelling, which, from some nets and a boat under repair, in a small yard in front of it, I concluded to be a fisherman's. As no vehicle could be readily procured, I determined to walk on, and easily reached Beaulieu, which is charmingly situated just within the skirts of the Sunapee Forest. After partaking of a slight repast at the principal hotel of the place, I easily contrived, by a few careless, indirect questions, to elicit all the information I required of a loquacious waitress. Mr. Lloyd, who seemed to bear an excellent character, lived, I was informed, at a cottage about half a mile distant, and chiefly supported himself as a measurer of timber—beech and ash. Miss Caroline, the girl said, did beautiful fancy-work. Mr. Lloyd had unconsciously betrayed his unfortunate, guilty brother into the hands of justice, and I, an agent of the iron law, was already upon the threshold of his hiding-place. I felt no pleasure at the success of the scheme.

I was about to quit the room in no very enviable frame of mind, when my boat companions, Mr. and Mrs. Jones, entered, and seated themselves at one of the tables. The apartment was rather a large one, and as I was seated in the corner of a box at some distance from the entrance, they did not at first observe me; and several words caught my ear which awakened a strong desire to hear more. That I might do so, I instantly adopted a very common, but not the less often very successful device. As soon as the newcomers perceived me, their whispered colloquy stopped abruptly; and after a minute or so, the man said, looking hard at me, "Good-day, sir; you have had rather a long walk;" and he glanced at my dusty boots.

"Sir," I replied, inclosing my ear in my left hand in the manner of a natural ear-trumpet, "did you speak? I am very deaf."

"A dusty walk," he rejoined in a voice that might have been heard in a hurricane.

"One o'clock!" I replied, pulling out my watch. "No; it wants a quarter yet."

"Deaf as a post," said Jones to his companion. "All right."

The suspended dialogue was but partially resumed.

"Do you think," said the woman, after the lapse of about five minutes—"do you think Owen and his family will go to Europe with us? I hope not."

"Not he; I only asked him just for the say-so of the thing. He is too chicken-hearted for that, or for anything else that requires pluck."

Finishing the drinks they had ordered, they soon afterwards went out. I followed.

As soon as we had gone about a hundred paces from the house, I said, "Can you tell me which is Mr. Lloyd the beech merchant's house?"

"Yes," replied the man, taking hold of my arm, and hallooing into my ear with a power sufficient to really deafen one for life; "we are going there to dine."

I nodded comprehension, and on we journeyed. We were met at the door by Owen Lloyd himself—a man in whose countenance guilelessness, even to simplicity, seemed stamped by nature's own true hand.

"I have brought you a customer," said Mr. Jones; "but he is as deaf as a stone."

I was courteously invited in by signs; and with much hallooing and shouting, it was finally settled that, after dinner, I should look over Mr. Lloyd's stock of wood. Dinner had just been placed on the table by Mrs. Lloyd and her daughter. Her daughter was, I thought, one of the most charming young women I had ever seen.

Dinner was just over when Mrs. Lloyd said: "Oh, Mr. Jones, have you seen anything of my husband's pocket-book? It was on a shelf in the room where you slept; not the last time, but when you were here about three weeks ago. We can find it nowhere; and I thought you might possibly have taken it by mistake."

"A black, common-looking thing?" said Jones.

"Yes."

"I did take it by mistake. I found it in one of my parcels, and put it in my pocket, intending of course to return it when I came back; but I remember, when wanting to open a lock of which I had lost the key, taking it out to see if it contained a pencil-case which I thought might answer the purpose; and finding none, tossing it away in a pet, I could not afterwards find it."

"Then it is lost?"

"Yes; but what of that? There was nothing in it."

"You are mistaken," rejoined Owen; "there was a five-dollar note in it, and a letter—— What is the matter, friend?

I had sprung upon my feet. Mr. Lloyd's observation recalled me to myself, and I sat down again, muttering about a sudden pain in the side.

"Oh, if that's the case," said Jones, "I'll make up your loss willingly. I am pretty rich, you know, just now."

"We shall be much obliged to you," said Mrs. Lloyd; "its loss would be a sad blow to us."

"How came you to send those heavy boxes here, Jones?" said Lloyd. "Would it not have been better to have sent them direct to Portland, where the vessel calls?"

"I had not quite made up my mind to return to Europe then; and I knew they would be safer here than anywhere else."

"When do you mean to take them away? We are so badly off for room that they terribly hamper us."

"This evening, about nine o'clock. I have hired a smack at Ford's Corners to take us, bag and baggage, down the river. We'll meet the liner at Portland to-morrow. I wish we could persuade you to go with us."

"Thank you, Jones," replied Owen, in a dejected tone, "I have very little to hope for; my heart bids me stay here."

I had heard enough; and hastily rising, intimated a wish to look at the lumber at once. Mr. Lloyd immediately rose, and Jones and his wife left the cottage to return to Ford's Corners at the same time that we did. I marked a few pieces of timber, and promising to send for them in the morning, hastened away.

I had just returned to the Beaulieu Hotel, after completing my arrangements, when an automobile drove furiously up to the door, and who should, to my utter astonishment, alight, but William Lloyd and Messrs. Smith, father and son. I hastened out, and briefly enjoining caution and silence, begged them to step with me into a private room. The agitation of Mr. Lloyd and of Arthur Smith was extreme, but Mr. Smith appeared cold and impassive as ever. I soon ascertained that Arthur, by his mother's assistance, had early penetrated his father's schemes and secrets, and had, in consequence, caused William Lloyd to be watched home, with whom, immediately after I had left, he had a long conference. Later in the evening an *eclaircissement* with the father took place; and after a long and stormy discussion it was resolved that all three should take the next morning train down to Beaulieu, and act as circumstances might suggest. My story was soon told. It was received, of course, with unbounded joy by the brother and lover; and even through the father's apparent indifference I could perceive that his refusal to participate in the general joy would not be of long duration. The large fortune which William Lloyd intimated his intention to bestow upon his niece was a new and softening element in the affair.

Mr. Smith, senior, ordered his dinner; and Mr. Lloyd and Arthur—but why need I attempt to relate what they did? I only know that when, a long time afterwards, I ventured to look in at Owen Lloyd's cottage, all the five inmates—brother, uncle, lover, niece and wife—were talking, laughing, weeping, smiling, like distracted creatures, and seemed utterly incapable of reasonable discourse. An hour after that, as I stood screened by a belt of forest trees in wait for Mr. Jones and company, I noticed, as they strolled past me in the clear moonlight, that the tears, the agitation had passed away, leaving only smiles and grateful joy on the glad faces so lately clouded by anxiety and sorrow. A mighty change in so brief a space!

Mr. Jones arrived with his cart and helpers in due time. A man who sometimes assisted in the timber-yard was deputed, with an apology for the absence of Mr. Lloyd, to deliver the goods. The boxes, full of valuables, were soon hoisted in, and the cart moved off. I let it proceed about a mile, and then, with the help I had placed in readiness, easily secured the astounded burglar and his assistants, and early the next morning Jones was on his road to New York. He was tried, convicted, and imprisoned; and the discretion I had exercised in not executing the warrant against Owen Lloyd was decidedly approved of by the authorities.

It was about two months after my first interview with Mr. Smith that, on returning home one evening, my wife placed before me a piece of bride-cake and two beautifully-engraved cards united with white satin ribbon, bearing the names of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Smith. I was more gratified by this little act of courtesy for Emily's sake, as those who have temporarily fallen from a certain position in society will easily understand, than I should have been by the costliest present. The service I had rendered was purely accidental; it has, nevertheless, been always kindly remembered by all parties whom it so critically served.

A STRANGE VISION

By ALEXANDER FLINT

EARLY in the winter I was in a large, old-fashioned house in Boston. Insomnia, brought on by business troubles, had reduced me to a state of nervous collapse, and I was on the verge of a serious illness.

Rising one night, after vainly courting sleep for two hours, I determined to take a warm bath. It was two o'clock. While the bath filled, I gazed out at the rear of a house, about one hundred yards distant, in C—— street.

Suddenly, on the illuminated curtain of a room two or three floors above the street, I saw figures of a man and woman in silhouette. Stirred by curiosity, I watched the curtain with its tell-tale pictures, wondering what movements they would execute. As I gazed, surprise and horror seized me, for I saw the man raise a shadowy arm, and pierce the woman's bosom with a dagger. She threw her arms wildly in the air, opened her mouth, as if to emit a scream, and fell to the floor, when, of course, her figure cast no shadow on the curtain.

All this had occupied perhaps less than two seconds, but in that time I endured a mental torture such as I had never felt before. As the dagger descended I involuntarily threw out my arms as if to shield the victim, and uttered an exclamation of mingled rage and horror.

I turned shuddering from the window just as the shadowy criminal stooped toward the spot where his victim lay, and before I could cry out I reeled and fell heavily to the floor.

My fall aroused the whole house, and Philip Holt, whose rooms were on the same floor with mine, carried me to bed. The vision of that night hastened my long threatened illness, and ten days passed before my faculties returned sufficiently for me to relate what I had seen. The doctor smiled at my story and said: "It was a pure hallucination, my dear fellow. Such things are quite common to persons in your condition."

"But," said I, "the thing happened when I was broad awake, and in every detail it was as distinct as any genuine occurrence I ever beheld."

"Not at all remarkable," was his reply. "You ought to be satisfied with the knowledge that there has not been a word of such a crime in any newspaper. An affair of the kind could not have been concealed for ten days. Don't think of it any more."

Two weeks later I was in my usual health, save that my old trouble of insomnia hovered threateningly near, and recurred with an imprudence in eating, worry, or excitement.

Not entirely satisfied with the doctor's theory of my vision, I went to the lodging-house in C—— street and inquired for rooms. A stuffy old hag, with peering, suspicious eyes and an air of undetected criminality, showed me through the house, and offered to let a furnished suite, consisting of sitting-room, bed-room and bath-room. As near as I could guess, the sitting-room was the one where the crime of my vision had been committed.

"Who occupied these rooms last?" I inquired.

"Mr. Carr and wife," answered the old hag, with evident unwillingness.

"Do you know Mr. Carr's business?"

"The tenant's business ain't none o' mine," she replied, sharply.

"When did the Carrs move out?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Did you see Mrs. Carr on the day they left the house?"

"Now, what do you ask me that for? I don't watch peoples' doin's in this house. The tenants is respectable families, and they don't like no meddlin'. If you want these rooms you can have 'em, but you won't stay long if you ask too many questions about your neighbors. We don't want no troublesome or worrying people here."

It was evidently useless to ask further questions, so I tramped downward through the ill-smelling, narrow hall, my suspicions far from lulled. A bold-faced woman widened her eyes at me on one stairway, and through an open door below I caught a glimpse of a tumbled bed and a soiled blue slipper, and a half-smoked cigarette beside it on the floor.

When I again spoke to Holt on the subject, and told him that my suspicions still existed, he deeply frowned, and said: "If you permit yourself to go on in this way, you'll be in bed again. There is no reasonable doubt of your hallucination. The books are full of such cases. Furthermore, the woman could not have been actually murdered, or the crime would have come to light ere this, and if she was only wounded, it is not your business to ferret the matter out. If you're not careful you'll get into the newspapers and be made ridiculous."

This last argument was enough. I gradually came to accept the theory of my friends. I passed through the winter without further illness, but gained strength slowly, and when spring appeared my sleeplessness returned. With it came an irresistible attraction toward the bath-room window, when my vision of a few months before had been seen. Whenever I lay awake I went some time during the long night and stared out toward that light in the lodging-house. Night after night I saw nothing, and turned away, relieved at the assurance that one sympton of my former illness was declining.

Punctually at one o'clock on a cool April morning, after three hours of vain tossing in bed, I entered the bath-room with my eyes directed toward the door. For an instant I could not credit the vision which met my gaze. On the luminous curtain where I had seen the shadowy pantomime before, the same tragedy was being enacted. This time I had arrived a little later in the progress of the scene, for here plainly was the falling woman and the withdrawn dagger in the hand of her companion. The man turned, as before, toward his victim, and I hoped to see him rise, in hopes of obtaining some clue than that which I seen was real. I saw nothing further. If the shadowy slayer had bent over a real victim, he must have risen in such a spot that his figure was not brought again between the light and the curtain.

Filled with the forebodings of a new illness, I awoke Holt, and told my vision. We went to the window, looked toward the lodging-house, and saw only the faint gleam of unlighted panes. Holt gave me an opiate, and the next morning the doctor had me removed to the country.

I remained out of town all summer, bathing, fishing and boating. For three months I went to bed tired every night, and slept ten hours. Then I took a long sea voyage, and arrived back about the middle of September, more robust than I had ever been before.

Holt and I laughed at the old hallucination, and the doctor rallied me considerably upon my detective spirit of the winter before. On the first night in my lodgings I forgot the fateful window, and slept without disturbance. The next night, however, I come in late, and yielded to a sudden whim that led me to the bath-room window.

As I entered the bath-room, I looked over toward the lodging-house, and gave a little start at seeing a light in the very apartment that had so long possessed for me a fascinating interest.

The night was warm, and the window whence the light shone was raised.

The curtains were drawn also, and I could see pretty clearly a man and a woman sitting opposite each other near the center of the room.

I shivered a little on discovering that the couples were very like those of the pantomimes. The man was smooth shaven and well featured. The woman seemed older than he, and her face fitted well with the names of evil suggestion that I had seen in the vestibule eight months before.

As I gazed I saw the woman suddenly start toward her companion with some gleaming weapon in her upraised hand.

Trembling with horror, I was about to cry out, when a heavy, natural laugh burst upon my ear from the hall.

On looking around, I saw my friend Holt in the doorway.

"Merciful powers, man! did you see that?" I gasped.

"It was real and unreal, old man. Your sight is vindicated, and the doctor and I are put to shame, but there is no cause for horror. See, the light has been turned out, and there is nothing more to be learned. Take something to steady your nerves, and I'll explain the mystery."

Wondering at his language, but considerably reassured, I followed him slowly to his room and sat down.

"Now," said Holt, "the thing you saw to-night"—I shuddered again as he spoke—"and on two other occasions, is easily explained. James Carr and his wife, who have lived in that apartment off and on for eight months, are known to many theater-goers here and elsewhere as Arthur Lercy and Mademoiselle Picard. What you saw to-night was the rehearsal of an incident in a play which is to be produced at the X—— Theater early next week. You'll find the very scene on a dozen boardings in the streets. It's a quarrel. The woman attacks the man with a pair of scissors, and he responds with a dagger. The play was produced last winter, and at one or two popular watering-places in the summer. You have seen three rehearsals."

"Holt, I don't believe you!" I cried, as it flashed upon me that my old illness was returning, and that Holt had taken this method of diverting my mind from the threatened calamity.

That evening, at dinner, while reading an afternoon paper, I came upon a conspicuous heading in these words: "Slain at Rehearsal." I started, read on, and discovered that James Carr, alias Arthur Leroy, had killed his wife the night before in their rooms in C—— street. Then I knew that Holt and I had actually seen the crime committed.

According to the newspaper account, Carr, on being arrested, had confessed the homicide and pleaded self-defense.

He had been married five years, but he and his wife had always lived a cat and dog's life. After their rehearsal of the night before she had called up an old grievance, and finally, in a fit of anger, attacked him with a pair of scissors, the very weapon she was to have used in the mimic scene on the approaching "first night." He had defended himself with the dagger just employed at rehearsal, and was horrified that he had slain her.

Nobody quite believed Carr's story at first, but the testimony of Holt and myself saved the poor fellow's neck.

IS THERE A HARMLESS DRINK?

THIS question was asked by a friend who is neither a teetotaller nor an immoderate drinker, says the London *Daily Mail*.

No alcoholic beverages can be called positively innocuous. The same thing may be said for the colored aerated waters known as "temperate drinks." These gaseous fluids are often injurious to the digestive organs.

Tea and coffee have poisons that retard digestion, produce nervous symptoms, interfere with the action of the heart and sometimes cause sleeplessness and headaches. Used immoderately, tea and coffee may induce gastric catarrh.

The evils attributed to alcoholic drinks are legion. Even the moderate use of alcohol is condemned by some eminent physicians. We must accept the fact that there is no pleasant beverage which can be said to be absolutely safe.

But the degree of risk varies very considerably. There is a great difference between the menace of a thin red or white wine, or light sound ale, and liquors, cocktails and strong spirituous fluids. It is highly probable that there is less risk in drinking a pint of mild ale or half a pint of "natural" claret than in drinking a pint of very strong tea.

It has been proved beyond question that a little alcoholic drink taken with meals is an aid to digestion. Tea drunk with a meal of meat, fish or eggs undoubtedly checks the digestive process. The thein or caffein in tea hinders and the alcohol in wine or ale assists digestion.

Although there is poison in every cup, whether the contents are alcoholic or non-alcoholic, we need not become faddists in the matter of drinking. The healthiest people are those who discover for themselves the foods or drinks that conduce to their well being. Admitting that no beverages are free from suspicion, we should choose those that experience proves to be least harmful and at the same time the most enjoyable.

Tea is the most popular of British beverages, and in spite of William Corbett's lament that "tea shops" were being substituted for wholesome small beer to the detriment of the populace in his day, "the cup that cheers" is the staple drink of all classes. It cannot be said that there has been any marked deterioration of English people through constant indulgence in tea.

The action of this stimulant on the brain is well known. Tea causes a slight rise in the blood pressure, gives a fillip to the heart, causes somewhat deeper breathing and restores for a spell waning muscular power. Its chief demerit is the retarding influence that it exerts upon digestion. As a digestive stimulant light ales or wines with a low alcoholic strength are often beneficial, especially in old age.

If people are told that they should drink nothing but water, there is the risk that they will suffer from an insufficient quantity of fluid. Drink, like food, should be agreeable to the taste.

THE BLACKMAILER

By LIEUTENANT DENNIS FOLEY

ON arriving at the Central office one morning I found a very handsome young lady just beginning to state a case to the chief. I was about to retire, but he cried:

"Don't go; this concerns you, Dan. Proceed, my dear young lady."

"My sister has been missing at least eighteen months."

"And you both were engaged in the dry goods trade in Blissville?"

"Yes. My uncles were the largest general merchants in that town."

"Just so."

"And my sister and I, although their nearest of kin, were treated just as were any of the other female assistants. We received fair salaries and lived and boarded in their house. Both uncles were bachelors, and, I fancy, looked down with contempt upon anything like courtship."

"And you fell in love?"

"Not at all," returned the young lady, without a blush. "My sister Mary, however, did. The bookkeeper fell in love with her."

"And the feeling was reciprocated?" proceeded the chief, who thoroughly appreciated subjects of this nature.

"Yes, I believe so," returned Dorcas Ibbetson. "Although both my uncles, Henry and Archibald, seldom interfered with the private affairs of their employees, they resented Ben Royle's attentions to Mary. He was the son of one of the surgeons in the town, and no doubt a good match.

"The end of it was they quarreled with Ben, and he came to New York to seek his fortune. For twelve months —while employed in a well-known Wall street house—he wrote nice letters to my sister. At the end of that period he wrote from the Curborough House. Three or four letters in all were received, and then he abruptly broke off corresponding, and from that day to this we have heard nothing more of him. After three weary years of slavery, Mary determined to follow her lover. She put up at the same boarding-house. Do you know the establishment?"

"We do," replied the chief. "It never bore a very good reputation. It has lately, however, changed hands. So your sister went there to live?"

"Until she procured a situation," Miss Ibbetson went on. "But I think her real object was to obtain information regarding Royle. She failed in this, and soon after got a berth in a place at Kingsbridge. She left this place suddenly about eighteen months ago, broken-hearted—if I may judge from the tone of her letter. I asked her to come home, and for a few busy weeks expected her; but she never came, and when I wrote to her late employers, they replied declining to give any particulars. Yesterday I called there, but saw over the door the names 'J. B. McCulloch, later Thompson and Winder.' When I made inquiry I found that Thompson and Winder had gone to Australia twelve months before. After a night's thought I resolved to place the whole matter in your hands."

"And you could not have made a wiser resolve," said the chief. "You wish us to trace your sister and Mr. Royle. Well, I pass you over to Dan Poynter, here; you cannot be in better hands. But how about the expense?"

"Oh, never mind the expense," cried Miss Ibbetson. "I am no longer the assistant to my uncles. They both died within three months of each other, and I have inherited all they possessed, including the business."

I was left with Miss Ibbetson, and we soon became very good friends; for she was about the frankest young woman I ever met, and as shrewd as the deepest city man.

I walked to the entrance of the office with Miss Ibbetson and became more chatty than I usually permit myself to be when engaged on business. I proceeded, as I saw her neatly appointed limousine:

"I sometimes regret that we can't act as the French detectives do. In Paris, a private officer would provide himself with unimpeachable 'references,' a shabby box, a portmanteau, a hat-box or small tin case, with a brown parcel or two, and clothed in somewhat threadbare garments, apply for apartments and board at such a place as the Curborough House. Once inside, it would be strange if he did not discover all he wanted to know of the character of the establishment, and perhaps find something else beside."

I saw that this speech had a peculiar effect upon the listener. Her dark eyes grew larger, and a gleam of light broke out from them, which led me to believe that, under certain circumstances, she would not hesitate about playing the spy.

"Before parting," she said, "I should like to have one glimpse of this den of iniquity—for that it is one, I have quite made up my mind," she continued. "Jump in, Mr. Poynter."

I proposed showing the way in a taxi-cab, but she would persist in my entering her limousine. Driving through Broadway, she drew my attention to a picture-poster displayed outside the chief entrance of a popular theater. The principal figure in it was that of a young gentleman in the picturesque costume of the end of the last century. He was close-shaved, and wore his own brown hair tied up in a ribbon and hanging over the high collar of his narrow-sleeved "claw-hammer-tail" coat of the period.

The piece was "She Stoops to Conquer," and under the picture these words appeared: "Last Two Nights. Mr. Dalton Rivers as Young Marlow."

"That," said Miss Ibbetson, "might stand as a portrait of Ben Royle."

Next morning, at breakfast, I received the following telegram from Miss Ibbetson:

"One of the lost ones found. Kindly come on here without delay."

I dressed in something like a city "get-up" that morning, for I did not wish the people at the hotel to suspect that Miss Ibbetson had business with our office. Upon arriving at the establishment in Broadway, a bellhop ushered me into the breakfast parlor on the ground floor.

"Take a seat, Mr. Poynter," said the lady, in the most approved business-like style. "You will be surprised, I am sure, to hear that I have discovered Mr. Royle. We have been very fortunate, and yet I am very unhappy, for I fancied he would be the most difficult to trace. It seems that he found out that my sister came up to town,

end has been privately trying to find her out for some time.

"You remember me telling you last night that the picture of the young actor might suit for a portrait of Ben Royle? Well, this kept haunting me all through dinner. I sent at once to engage a box for the night. Several of my buyers are up from Blissville and are putting up at a hotel in Forty-second street. Miss Kerr, of the mantle department, is one of my old companions, so I sent for her to keep me company until this difficulty is over. She is older than I am, and of course knew Mr. Royle as well as I did.

"Well, we went to the theater, and waited impatiently enough until the actor made his appearance. It was in the middle of the second scene—the interior of the inn—and my heart fell within me when a tall, graceful, polished young gentleman made his entrance, following the country landlord. His first words were:

"'What a tedious, uncomfortable day have we had of it!' and my heart leaped for joy just as Miss Kerr whispered excitedly:

"'It is he—it is Mr. Royle! Why should not he have let us know what had become of him? It's cruel—it's too bad!' But we soon forgave him, and forgot his offenses, for he has turned out a fine actor, and, indeed, we are very fond of him."

Briefly, Miss Ibbetson said that she sent her name around to the actor, with the number of her box. He found her at the end of the second act, and there ensued limited explanations. He had been in Europe for three years—indeed, ever since he became an actor.

"You remember," concluded Miss Ibbetson, "what you said a French detective would probably do in our case yesterday. To-night finishes Mr. Royle's season. I mentioned to him what you had said, and without a moment's hesitation, he replied that he had planned something of the kind himself, and was now ready to execute it. He has something to be revenged for, but has not yet explained. All he wanted, he said, was the co-operation of a distinguished detective, and he appeared quite delighted when I informed him that I had secured your services. He is waiting for us upstairs, and now that I have prepared you, we had better join him and Miss Kerr."

He was a splendid fellow, the young actor, and I soon had reason to believe that he had been seriously injured by the Curborough people.

It is unnecessary here to go into details. I went to the theater on Saturday night and saw him "make up" as an impecunious clerk. Notwithstanding his brief career, he was, and is, a splendid actor. Every detail of his threadbare suit was painfully correct. The rustic-looking black morning-coat beginning to break at the button-holes, whitish-blue on the elbows, and short in the sleeves, looked as completely genuine as the old linen cuffs, frayed at the edges, coming down over his red hands. The thin, dark trousers were neatly darned on the left knee; what was seen of the vest was shiny and displayed odd buttons, and his boots were just a little down at the heel, while two small patches were seen where rents had gaped before.

The grip and hat-box he took with him were quite in keeping with his attire; and thus equipped, and without an overcoat, he appeared at the door of Curborough's boarding-house one cold, bleak, cheerless night in March.

I proceeded with my inquiry regarding Miss Mary Ibbetson, but without success. Her sister, however, did not complain, so full of confidence was she in the ultimate success of Royle's plan. He had arranged to communicate with me at my private address, and Miss Brown (Miss Ibbetson), his fiancée, was supposed to be lodging there.

A fortnight passed, and at last a letter came from Royle, whose name was supposed to be Daniel Robertson. It was addressed to Miss Brown, so I hurried to Miss Ibbetson's hotel with it at once. It ran as follows:

MY DEAR CATHERINE: It will no doubt grieve you to hear that I have got nothing as yet in the way of a situation. Cash is running low, and I would be in a bad way but for the aid promised me by a benevolent gentleman who frequently visits and befriends the boarders here. They say he is very wealthy, and takes great interest in young people, particularly those who wish to get their own in the world, and can't, through no fault of theirs. He has a good many friends in the drygoods trade, and says that he hopes to get a good 'sit' for me by and by. After that he will do his best for you; but promises nothing definite until he sees you, for it seems he believes in phrenology, and something else, which he says go a long way further than characters, testimonials and refs. Inclose trifle to go on with; and, hoping you are comfortable with your friends, I am ever your own DANIEL.

"P. S.—I forgot to say the good gentleman's name is Foxgrove."

"I wonder what all this means?" murmured Miss Ibbetson, with a perplexed air, fingering the post-office order for two dollars inclosed.

"It is all right," I said. "I perceive that he is acting a part. We must be patient. The mention of this Mr. Foxgrove means something. Will you permit me to look at the letter? Hah!" I cried. "As I supposed. There is a message inside here in faint pencil lines. Please read it."

Miss Ibbetson had difficulty in deciphering the following:

"Closely watched. Thought wouldn't be permitted to post this myself, but was, after all. I pretend—reckless—do anything for money. P—— should watch Foxgrove. Reddish old man, shabby coat, large shepherd-check trousers, gaiters, thick glass, owlish-looking spectacles, light, broad-brimmed, tall hat. Where puts up at night must be carefully known."

"That will do, Miss Ibbetson," I cried. "You perceive both sides are playing a good game. They think Royle fit for good, if dirty, work, and wish to secure him. He, on his part, I think fit to dupe them—with our assistance. The real object of the letter is found in the pencil note. I must set out upon Foxgrove's trail at once; but first I'll telegraph for two assistants, so that he may never be far out of our sight."

I did not catch sight of Mr. Foxgrove the first night, but on reaching Curborough's boarding-house, my shadower told me he was inside. It was dusk when he made his appearance, but I had no difficulty in at once concluding that he was altogether disguised.

I and my operative followed him to the vicinity of Times Square, where he took a taxicab, after looking suspiciously around for a few moments. We followed his example, and our car followed his to Great Jones street, where we got out at the private door of a house, the lower part of which was occupied by "N. Whitefoord, Financial and Commission Agents."

He remained there all night, and when he left, after four o'clock in the afternoon, it was to go to Curborough's. After dark he returned to Great Jones street again, and so on for four days and nights in succession.

Upon receiving this report I concluded that Mr. Foxgrove resided there. Assuming a farmer's costume, I

next called upon Mr. Whitefoord. He was a tall, thin, bald-headed man, with bushy tufts of gray hair over his ears.

I told him that I had a sandhill near Cow Bay for sale. It would make fine building material, and I wanted a business man to dispose of it for me on commission. He asked me for a sample, but refused to undertake the business unless I deposited at least one hundred dollars for advertising purposes.

The following day I received a letter for Miss Ibbetson, which intimated the fact that Daniel Robertson had been engaged at a fair salary by Nathaniel Whitefoord, commission agent, Great Jones street, and that he had entered upon his duties at once.

Eight days later the following came to hand:

"My Dear Catherine: I write you in the deepest grief. Temptation came in my way, and I fell. Stolen money was found upon me, and a policeman was called in; but Mr. Whitefoord has generously forgiven me, and promises us a lump sum of money to take us out to Australia in return for certain services. These, I am assured, will be of the simplest nature, and when they are done we will be helped out to Sydney, where we can begin the world anew. The hardships I have suffered lately made my fall easy when money came in my way, but I promise you never to be tempted again. I am grieved more for you than for myself; but feeling new strength and resolution to do good after being so generously forgiven, I implore you to come to me at once. Your unhappy but ever loving

"Daniel."

I explained what I understood by that letter, and after a very little delay Miss Ibbetson consented to join Royle under the name of Brown, and in very shabby attire.

Five days later I found an automobile waiting for me at the office when I arrived there. The owner, Mr. Rancourcy, was waiting for me. In his youth I knew that he had been among the wildest, but that in middle age his brilliance as a statesman had led people to forget the mad past. Although I could not understand why he desired to see me, I imagined the business had something to do with Royle, and I leaped into the car without delay.

Arrived at Rancourcy's house, I was greeted by Royle now attired like the gentleman he was. He drew me into a private room, and said:

"You no doubt wonder why I was so anxious to go to the rascally Curborough's rooms."

"One reason was a desire to find a clue to Miss Mary Ibbetson," I answered.

"Yes," he returned, "and I hope to do so still. My chief desire, however, was to bring a coterie of heartless crooks to justice. I went to live there after leaving my first situation as a clerk. I got 'hard up,' and confessed as much to my fellow boarders. One day I received a post-office order from a friend and went out to enjoy myself. It was late at night when I returned, and I was going into the sitting-room when I was solemnly requested to walk into the parlor. I was at once accused of robbing several of my fellow lodgers of different sums of money, and was asked what I proposed to do to prevent my being sent to prison. I was so astounded and indignant that I used strong language, and demanded being sent to prison. That, however, was not Curborough's game. My box had been broken open in the presence of several servants and a policeman, who found the marked money there. Finding a net woven around me, so to speak, I asked what they proposed. The elder Curborough placed a written paper on the table, saying:

"'We can procure a situation for you at about one thousand dollars a year, and if you agree to pay us half your salary for two years, we will let you go now without prosecuting, and say nothing more about the matter. Refuse, and you are locked up to-night.'

"As a man in uniform appeared—I don't believe he was a real cop—I grew so indignant again that I indulged in a general fight, knocking the officer down and escaping from the cursed house. I tried for no other situations. Joining a theatrical company, I was asked no questions, and soon got on pretty well. Then, as you know, I went to Europe to wipe out the past, but returned when I thought of Mary Ibbetson.

"I determined to trap the Curboroughs, so consented to become impecunious Dan Robertson. Old Foxgrove, a friend of the house, took an interest in me and lent me one hundred dollars—two fifty-dollar notes. Then he got me the situation at Whitefoord's. I was not a week there when I was accused of robbing the safe. A policeman was brought in—another fictitious one—and one of the missing bank-notes was found in my valise. The same game, but different in details. Mr. Whitefoord would not prosecute if I consented to a plan of his. I pretended I would accept any terms. An impecunious fellow who owed money to Whitefoord would recommend me as secretary to Banker Rancourcy. I was to purloin that gentleman's keys and steal a packet of old letters, which were described, and send them to Whitefoord. These would enable him to levy blackmail from his victim, for the letters treated of a very dark episode in his past life which would scandalize the world if raked up again. I was so shocked at the cold-blooded proposal that I declined point-blank.

"Then," proceeded Royle, "I thought of applying to you, Mr. Poynter, to get me out of the difficulty. At the same instant it struck me that Whitefoord might get some unprincipled rascal to steal Rancourcy's letters; so I concluded to come myself and make a clean breast of the whole thing to Mr. Rancourcy. I have done so. He handed me some of the letters to forward to Whitefoord, who will be here at twelve o'clock to propose terms. He thinks I have left the house, and demands fifty thousand dollars to close his mouth.

"The scoundrel Whitefoord has two strings to his bow. The lady implicated in the scandal with Rancourcy is the wife of a certain general. He got a young lady appointed there as reader, twelve months ago, but that young person has not succeeded in stealing the letters of the general's wife. Miss Ibbetson, as Miss Brown, has gone there as a new maid to accomplish the robbery, the companion being ill. Of course, Miss Ibbetson explains to the general's wife as I have done to Mr. Rancourcy."

I was introduced to Rancourcy, and having sent my two men to search Whitefoord's house—a risk I took on myself without a warrant—when he had left it, I waited for the rascal's appearance. I listened to a part of his interview with Mr. Rancourcy from an ante-room, and interrupted it when it was getting painful, arresting him after a brief struggle, when he acknowledged that his real name was Curborough, once a butler with Rancourcy, but that he had lived a life of swindling under the names of Curborough, Foxgrove and Whiteford, his victims numbering thousands.

Miss Ibbetson found that the reading companion of the general's wife was her sister Mary, who was also accused of theft under Curborough's roof.

Mary is now the wife of the distinguished actor, Royle, and Dorcas Ibbetson married a clergyman, soon after disposing of her uncle's business, the proceeds of which, and the money left, she divided with her sister.

STORIES OF GREAT DETECTIVES

BY A NEW YORK JOURNALIST

The writer has had occasion professionally to learn a great deal about the real detectives. He has talked with them, corresponded with them, heard the narrative of their lives and exploits, and enjoyed in reality all the interest and excitement connected with these men that is constantly presented in the fiction of the day.

For the benefit of the thousands of readers of "Mystery Magazine," we propose to relate some of our experiences, and give a rapid glance at the most noted men in the different cities of the United States. The number of professional detectives is now very large. They are employed in every branch of the United States Government; all the great cities have a trained force, and the private agencies are to be found in all the cities, with correspondents throughout the civilized world. Our "Stories of Great Detectives" give, perhaps, the first familiar relation ever attempted of the characteristics of the great detectives who have made the detection of crime a new science.

DETECTIVE THOMAS

ROBERT J. LINDEN was one of the most conspicuous detectives in the country. He won all his fame in the service of the Pinkerton agency, and was in charge of the branch office in Philadelphia.

Here is an interesting account of the proceedings of Detective Thomas, of the Philadelphia office, who was sent by Linden to Ohio to make certain delicate investigations. Thomas was described by Mr. Bangs as a man "resolute, noiseless and quick as a mousing cat."

A consultation on an important forgery and mail robbery case had been held at the Philadelphia office. Mr. Pinkerton, describing the case, said:

"The detective was called in and directed to inform himself, from the papers on the table, of the merits of the talk on hand.

"This he carefully did, making copies of the personal descriptions, and full memoranda of such dates, names, and other particulars as he thought might prove serviceable. The general superintendent next gave him an idea of his own views of the case, and such hints as he thought necessary on the subject of shadowing a suspect called Wales. He was then desired to hold himself in readiness for his western trip, pending the receipt of my telegram approving its purpose."

There was great mystery about the case. It was discovered, however, that one of the parties had written letters to Redrock, Ohio, and the detective was now sent there to investigate.

It was a place with valuable stone quarries.

Mr. Pinkerton continued:

"Suddenly, on rounding a ledge by the roadside, the detective came upon a small wooden hut, used as a toolhouse, before which was seated, on a stone block, a man who was occupied in the manipulation of blast charges. As he was within a few feet of him, there was no time for reflection, so Thomas saluted him promptly with a 'Good-day, neighbor!'

"'The same to yourself, very kindly, sir,' was the civil reply of the quarry-man, delivered in a frank and hearty voice, every tone of which was an echo of the Green Isle.

"'Is this Reuben Clark's quarry?' next inquired the detective.

"'No, sir, that it isn't,' was the answer; 'but it's Misther Andherson's, ov Dayfiance—though they say it'll soon be somebody else's. If you're lookin' for Clark's place, it's just beyant the creek brudge a bit.'

"'I suppose there are some men working over there?' pursued Mr. Thomas. 'I am anxious to get a little information about the stone.'

"'Arrah! not a sthroke o' work was done there this six months, sor, an' it's a marcy if we're not all workin' the same way afore long. But shure I can tell you mesilf a'most anythin' you want about the primises, and heartily welcome.'

"'Thank you, thank you; but I intend to make an inspection of it as well. Is the rock much the same as what Mr. Anderson has here?'

"'Musha, thin, it's exactly the same,' said the Hibernian, 'only it's a good dale betther. It's a kind ov limestone, too, but it's close an' stiff, an' if I was a buildher, I'd rather have it than any quarry on the creek. But if I may make so bould, sor, war you thinkin' ov runnin' it?'

"'Well, I can't precisely say,' replied Mr. Thomas; 'a friend of mine along near Sandusky is interested in certain kinds of stone, and will quarry extensively if he can find enough of the right sort. He wants a——'

"'Hould on a minute, sor,' interrupted the quarry-man. 'I see my min is ready for this blast, an' if you only wait till I fix it, I'll take a sthroll over to Clark's place an' show it to you.'"

After the blast the detective and communicative Irishman walked over to Clark's quarry. He obtained the further information that "a son of Jidge Wales"— the very man he was on the track of—was talking of buying the property.

"Once more," writes Mr. Pinkerton, "had Mr. Thomas stumbled on the man he was interested in, but though much pleased thereat, he did not lose sight of his instructions, to 'make haste slowly.'"

"'I suppose,' he observed, after a while, 'I suppose you are afraid that the new proprietor will tackle his own quarry work?'

"'No, it isn't that ayther, sir. Willie Wales, indeed, he's too much of a young squireen for that! But he has a brother in these parts that's not makin' much of his little farm, an' by the way he hangs round the stone banks an' watches the dhrillin' and blastin', I think he's layin' himself out for the new job. If your friend tuk it into his head to buy Clark's place, do you think he wants a foreman, sir?"

"Other conversation followed, when the detective brought it back to the person of most interest to himself.

"'Mr. Wales is not a man of property, then,' threw out the detective.

"'Property!' echoed Rody, with a disdainful emphasis; 'sure it's only a twelvemonth ago I saw him wid me own eyes, loafin' around the village here, not doin' a hand's turn, and he hadn't the price of a lager beer, only what his old man gev him. An' now, sir, it's nothin' but kid gloves an' gold watches wid him, an' cigars an' dhrinks for every one he comes acrass.'

"'He may have started some profitable city trade?' suggested the considerate Thomas.

"'What ever kind of thrade it is, sir, he keeps goin' an' comin' from some place down Aist, stoppin' a few days at a time, an' as sure as he comes back they say he has lashins o' fresh money! Maybe you've heard tell, sir, what *keero* and *fano* is?'

"'Thomas could scarcely suppress a laugh as he discerned in the misplaced syllables the material for the words 'keno' and 'faro.'

"'Oh, yes,' he answered, 'I believe they are some of the plundering games carried on in big cities.'

"'I knew be the sound a'most there was nothin' good about thim,' said Rody, shaking his head impressively; 'an' sure, I overheard him meself talkin' to wan of the young bucks at Kramer's, an' laughin' about some wan he saw thryin' to "break the bank"—jist as unconsarned, sir, as if there wasn't the laste bit of harm in it.'

"Thomas recognized here another common phrase from the gambler's vocabulary; but he merely lifted up his brows with an expression of virtuous astonishment.

"'Yis, sir,' continued Rody, by way of explanatory finish, 'I've no gridge again any man, nor I don't like to spake bad of any one, but sure ould Jake Bartlett, the tinsmith, that knows every bird ov the Wales family—an' be the same token there's no love lost between them—Jake says, by the vartue of his honor, Willie Wales can't be gittin' his money honest.'"

From this beginning, Detective Thomas picked up a great deal of information in the place, but it was a long chase to finally run down the game. W. R. Wales plundered the mails, and one R. L. Dudley forged and collected the drafts.

The men were both sentenced for a like term in the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania.

One thing will specially strike the reader.

These Pinkerton detectives are no blunderers. Whatever they do is so perfect in character that they carry out their plans in the most complete manner.

"Why," said a gentleman to the writer, not long since, "why, this detective business has now reached a point that any man or woman you may encounter—high or low—may be in the employ of some agency."

Mr. Linden was a great detective, and it has been his effort to train those under him in a manner to reflect credit upon themselves, and aid in the skillful and successful apprehension of criminals. He makes each case a study—not only of the circumstances and facts as they be developed, but he gains his clues from a deep penetration into human motives.

He was a pleasant and polite man.

Unless he had some stern duty as a detective to perform.

Then he was the cold and emotionless, while just, man, who moves from step to step in his duty, directed by the highest skill and by a sense of obligation to the broken laws.

SECRET SERVICE CHIEF J. J. BROOKS

THIS gentleman was the chief of the most important branch of the detective work of the United States Government, as he was connected with the Treasury Department.

His subordinates in the different cities were men of sufficient ability to conduct the most difficult detective work themselves, but they were always absolutely under the orders of the chief in Washington.

Consequently he was a man with a good deal on his mind at all times. The reports from every office reached him daily, and, as he looked over them, he had to detect the weak points, if any, and make suggestions or issue positive instructions. When it is remembered how vast is the business of the public treasury, and how numerous and determined are the persons who seek to issue counterfeit money, and commit other frauds upon it, it will be appreciated that the chief Secret Service officer has great and constant responsibilities.

Going into his office in Washington, you found him before a desk covered with papers. He was systematic, everything about public business moved like clock-work; but work as hard as he might, papers accumulated about until he had to dig his way through them.

Each month a tabulated report was prepared, showing the transactions of the office for the entire period. It stated who had been arrested, and the disposition of the case, who was released from prison, and all other necessary facts to preserve a perfect record.

Chief Brooks was a self-possessed and clear-headed man.

He understood the best kind of detective work thoroughly, and he was not satisfied with anything else. He inspired all his officers with a high spirit of emulation, and the force to-day is working with an efficiency that is showing itself in the discomfiture of the counterfeiting class throughout the United States.

Chief Brooks declared that in one particular he was a surprise to himself. While he had been a detective for more than seventeen years, and more or less before the public in important cases, still he positively hated publicity. He was not constantly seeking to have his name before the public, which has been the failing of many men in like positions, but simply desired to attend conscientiously and energetically to his official duties.

In all intercourse he was a very polite and agreeable man, and could be entertaining, too, with his many and exciting adventures; but here again he was extremely modest, and had to be drawn out. A capable officer and an upright man, he was deserving of the popularity which he enjoyed.

Be sure to read the story of Detective John P. Horr in our next issue. It will interest you.

STONES AS MONEY

IN the Island of Yap, one of the Caroline Islands, which passed by purchase from Spanish to German sovereignty after the Spanish-American war, and have since passed by conquest into the possession of Great Britain, stone money called "fei" is used as a medium of exchange in addition to the ordinary shell money. It consists of large, solid stone wheels, ranging in diameter from one to twelve feet, and having a central hole through which a pole can be inserted. These stones are all quarried in the Pelew Islands, about 200 miles south, and are brought to the Carolines by boat. The large stones weigh as much as five tons. The value represented by a stone is, naturally, proportionate to its size. The limestone of which fei is composed must be of the very best, fine white grain to be considered good for delivery. Yet there seems to be no need for delivery at all, for it is quite customary to earmark the money, as it were, and then leave it in its old position outside its first owner's hut. The owner for the time being possesses the power to wield the influence which attaches to this visible display of wealth.

A DETECTIVE'S MISTAKE

A Serial Story

By GILBERT MACKEY

CHAPTER FOUR

TO-MORROW

AS Constantine looked at the detective, he saw the former's face was deathly pale.

"Say, Maurice," he muttered, as the latter turned toward the door of his own house. "To look at that fellow we would almost be inclined to think that it was he who had stuck that knife into Gaylord."

"Nonsense, Sim! How can you mention such a thing? Besides, hasn't Al been with us all the evening?"

"Yes, except during the time he was out on the deck of the ferry-boat."

"It's absurd, ridiculous. Why, he and Ed Gaylord were the very best of friends."

"Oh, of course I didn't mean it seriously. Good-night, Andy. Good-night, Al. Hope you'll come out O. K. in the morning."

Maurice Barrytown and Sim Scudder disappeared within the door of one house, while Andy Fenn, leading his friend up the steps, opened his own door with a key, and drew him into the other.

Strange to say, not one of the family had been disturbed by the noise, and the house, save for the single hanging gas jet left burning for Andy's personal benefit, was entirely dark.

Leading his companion up a flight of stairs, Andy opened the door of the rear chamber and quietly ushered him in.

A bed occupied one side of the apartment—table and chairs filling the rest.

A luxurious carpet covered the floor; upon the table books and papers were scattered. A fire burned low in the grate, for the evenings were now cool, and Mrs. Fenn was ever watchful for the health and comfort of her son.

Upon the walls various pictures were suspended, while over the mantel-piece just above Andy's little alarm-clock, a rifle was to be seen, hung between a pair of fencing foils; it was evidently the room of a thorough boy.

Andy hastily lit the gas and drew down the shades.

As he did so the little alarm-clock rang out the hour of one.

"Come, Al," he said, as his friend sank wearily into a chair, "let's get to bed at once; you're completely broken up and the sleep will do you good."

He pulled off his coat as he spoke and flung it into a chair.

This was followed by his vest, and having wound his watch and laid it upon the bureau, he proceeded to unbutton his shoes.

He then hung his own banjo in a closet, and picking up that belonging to his friend, which he had allowed to drop carelessly to the floor, he laid that upon a bureau at one end of the room.

As he did so he again observed how sadly broken it was; that the parchment had been burst completely through; that the strings were every one snapped short off from below, and hung loosely from the keys.

"By gracious, Al!" he exclaimed, "your banjo is badly smashed for a fact."

Al Constantine turned his head and regarded him wildly.

"Yes, Andy, it is worthless now."

"Oh, no, it can be fixed."

"It will never be fixed; I shall never pick that banjo again."

"Al Constantine, what the deuce ails you? 'Twas well enough to make all this mystery with the rest of the fellows, but if you have a friend in the world, it's Andy Fenn; don't hide your troubles from me. Why, I'd go through fire to serve you—you know that well enough."

Tears stood in the boy's eyes as he spoke.

If Andy Fenn possessed a fault, and he was as faultness as any youth of his age that ever breathed, it was that of an utterly unreasoning devotion to his friends, upon the long list of whom Alfred Constantine stood first of all.

As he stood there now in his underclothes only, with his youthful form fully disposed in all its well-rounded proportions, he looked the noble fellow that he was, and that is saying quite enough.

"I know it, Andy," replied the other, seeming to shake off his lethargy. "You are the best, the truest friend that ever a fellow had. It will need all the friendship you possess to stick by me in what may come upon me before to-morrow's sun goes down, for somehow—I can't explain why—I feel—I feel as though I stood on the brink of a horrible chasm—of an affliction so deep that——"

"Nonsense—nonsense!" cried his friend, slapping him on the back, and then springing into bed. "You are all broken up to-night; to-morrow you'll see things in a different light."

"No, no, Andy. I know what I'm saying well enough. You would agree with me if you knew all."

"Then why in thunder don't you tell me? Or, what's more to the point, why don't you come to bed?"

"I'll tell you in the morning," muttered the young man, beginning hastily to disrobe. "I can't tell you now. I must have time to think. To-morrow shall certainly tell you all."

He pulled off his clothes, turned out the gas, stepped into bed and laid down by the side of his friend.

To-morrow!

To-morrow the child will be a man—to-morrow he is in his grave.

To-morrow the sinner will repent—to-morrow comes, and lo! he has perished in the night!

To-morrow the anxious sailors upon the ship, returning from a three years' voyage, will be in port, be at home, embrace wives and children once again; and when to-

morrow's sun rises upon the ocean, the noble ship has sunk in the storm of to-night—sunk to rise no more!

Where would Al Constantine be to-morrow?

Little did Andy Fenn imagine what to-morrow would, for his friend who lay beside him, bring forth, for Andy was neither a philosopher nor an alarmist.

For him, to-day was all there was—to-morrow might take care of itself.

In spite of his anxiety, because of the strange state into which his friend had fallen; in spite of the vivid recollections still fresh in his mind, of the horrible sight he had but just witnessed in the hack, this young man, with nerves untouched by dissipation, could not resist the demands of tired nature many moments.

The objects about the room seemed to blend one within the other; the table embraced the bureau, the fencing foils seemed to hug the gun, the fire in the grate grew dimmer—dimmer—dimmer, and Andy Fenn was fast asleep.

How long he slept the boy would probably have never known if it had not chanced that at the precise moment upon which his eyes opened again the little alarm-clock upon the mantel rang out the hour of three.

He raised his head slightly from the pillow, and glancing across the bed at his friend, who occupied the place nearest the wall, saw that he was in a deep sleep.

"It'll do him good," thought Andy. "There's nothing like sleep when a fellow's used up, and as I'm pretty well played myself, after our little racket of last night, why, here goes for another snooze."

He had just laid his head down upon the pillow again, and was about to close his eyes, when he was startled by a low sound at one of the windows which opened at the rear of the room.

At the same instant he saw the sash slowly raised and the form and face of a man, his face covered by a black silk mask, his body enveloped in what appeared to be a long black cloak, was protruded through the open space into the room.

The moon shone brightly from behind the window, and as the man had raised the shade upon the instant of throwing up the sash, Andy had not the slightest difficulty in seeing all that occurred.

His first impulse was to spring out of bed and seize such weapons as might come to hand—the fencing foils or the gun.

The fact of the latter being unloaded caused a moment's hesitation.

The delay was fatal.

The midnight intruder had leaped into the room. It was fight now, if he attempted to interfere, but then, there were two to one, and he well knew that no braver boy than Al Contsantine lived. Nevertheless, the young man had no particular desire for a personal encounter with a midnight house-breaker, if it could be avoided.

He therefore determined to feign sleep, at least for a few moments, and see what the results might be. He, accordingly, lay motionless where he was, and breathing regularly like a person asleep, with one eye half opened, followed the movement of the man about the room.

Upon stepping through the open window, for an instant he stood perfectly still, as though surveying the apartment in the moonlight to discover the lay of the land. First he turned his head toward the bed, and seemed to scan the countenances of the sleeping boys; then he examined the furniture of the room, looked at the clothes of both sleepers, thrown carelessly upon different chairs.

At length his eyes seemed to rest upon the broken banjo which lay upon the bureau. With a sudden stride forward he took it in his hand. For one moment he gazed upon it, and then, with a quick jerk, appeared to seize one of the broken strings and tear it from the key.

"Done! done in safety!" Andy heard him mutter. "Now my quarrelsome young friend, we shall see what we shall see."

With one stride he had gained the window—with another he was gone.

He had leaped through the aperture, closed the sash, and disappeared. Andy Fenn sprang out of bed with a bound. Flinging up the sash, he looked out upon the night. In the moonlight the back yards of the row of which his own residence formed one were plainly to be seen. A grape arbor, upon which clustered a now leafless vine, extended along the rear of the house and the one next adjoining.

This was the boarding-house in which Maurice Barrytown and the detective were sleeping even now.

If a man could succeed in climbing the rear fence of either of these yards he would have no difficulty in ascending the grape arbor, and entering the second-story windows of either the Fenns or Mrs. McGruber's select boarding establishment next door.

As there were only vacant lots behind the houses, this was evidently just what the intruder had done. By the trellis he had entered, by the trellis he had made his escape. Now he was nowhere to be seen. Evidently he had leaped the fence and run away.

Mentally, Andy upbraided himself for a fool in allowing any such easy method of penetrating his apartment to exist. But what had been the intruder's object? Save the banjo, upon the bureau, he had not touched a thing.

Andy picked up the broken banjo and held it up in the full light of the moon. The silver-wound base string had disappeared!

CHAPTER FIVE

SIM SCUDDER

WHEN Detective Sim Scudder had business on hand, he spent no time in idle play. So far we have seen this noted member of the force off duty only—out with his friends for a little lark.

The tragical termination of that evening's pleasure we have also seen. Let us now follow our friend in the strange case which had been brought so unexpectedly to his notice. When Sim Scudder retired to bed with Maurice Barrytown, it was with feelings unpleasantly disturbed to the last degree.

He had possessed a motive for taking charge of the banjo string found grasped in the dead man's hand, as well as the knife which had caused the fatal wound.

Contact with the world had rendered him suspicious, and that the life of a detective had not been in the least calculated to make him less so may be easily believed. Older by several years than his young friends, as we have said, this man had, during his official career, worked out to a successful termination many celebrated cases, had solved many mysteries, stopped short many hardened criminals in their career of crime.

In the murder of Edson Gaylord in an ordinary hired automobile, he saw a case bound to be celebrated at once.

True, it was out of his jurisdiction, probably; but then there was an even chance of the murder having been committed before the taxi left New York, and as detectives of that city are frequently called upon to assist their Brooklyn brethren, he well knew that if he chose to exert

such influence as he possessed, he could easily arrange to have the matter placed in his hands if he desired to do so.

Not that this was his desire. By no means. As he felt now, Sim Scudder would have rather that any detective upon the force should assume the responsibility of working up this particular murder case than he.

He had learned from the chauffeur that he had crossed the Roosevelt street ferry with his fare, and as the boats at that late hour ran at long intervals, the detective strongly suspected that the taxi had crossed upon the same boat with himself and his friends.

The strange conduct of Al Constantine had been by no means lost upon this man of many mysteries—for Sim Scudder was all of that—and reluctant as he was to believe one guilty of murder whom he both respected and admired, the detective could not fail to see that if this proved to be the case, suspicion must of a certainty fall upon his friend.

The case was simply this: Al Constantine had left the cabin of the ferry-boat, banjo in hand, as full of life and spirits as any member of the little party of which he formed one. A few moments later he had returned, pale, scratched, and with his clothes torn half off his back, his banjo broken and utterly ruined, his wits gone none could tell where.

What had occurred during the interim? He would not tell. That he had engaged in personal conflict with some one was evident. If so, who could that person have been?

Maurice Barrytown, who had gone in search of him, had been unable to find him either on the decks or in the ladies' cabin, and had, moreover, in neither place encountered any one at all. The carriage-way between the cabins given up to carriages, trucks and teams alone remained.

If this taxi-cab had crossed upon the *Nevada*, that was precisely where it would have been, and there the conflict must have occurred. In his reasoning he perceived at once that the fact of the bass string of a banjo having been found grasped in the dead man's hand would certainly lead one to believe that the murderer had carried just such an instrument.

Here the train of evidence came to an abrupt end. Had not Al Constantine returned to the cabin with a broken banjo? Was, or was not, the bass string of that banjo gone? This was exactly what Sim Scudder did not know.

During the excitement which followed the discovery of the body, these things had but dimly passed through his mind, and it was not until young Constantine had fainted at the sight of the body that his suspicions had been aroused at all.

As he lay beside his friend Barrytown, Sim Scudder thought of many things. The sum total of his thoughts amounted to the devout hope that by the rising of to-morrow's sun he might be told that Al Constantine had run away. He plainly saw that he was destined to be mixed up in the case, no matter what means he might take to avoid it, and in that firm resolve to do his duty the detective turned over and went to sleep.

When he awoke, the sun was already up and shining brightly through the slats of the closed blinds. Sim sprang out of bed, and began hurriedly to put on his clothes.

"Are you off?" asked Barrytown, sleepily raising his head. "Seems to me you are up confoundedly early, considering the time we turned in."

"It's six o'clock, and I've got to visit the precinct station and report on this murder business before I go to New York."

"Oh, that's it! Well, all I can say is I hope they'll catch the fellow that put that knife into poor Ed."

"I hope so," was the short reply.

"Who do you suppose could have done it?"

"How should I know?"

"But you may have a theory. Detectives are supposed to be full of theories, you know."

"I never theorize on a case that I don't understand, Maurice."

"And you are quite right. Confound it, I suppose I must get up, too, and go in and comfort Ella; it's a deuced disagreeable thing to do."

"Ella—who is she?"

"Ella Gaylord—Ed's sister. You know we're engaged."

"No, I didn't know it. You're in luck, Maurice. Those Gaylords are believed to be well fixed."

"That's a mistake. Both Ed and Will made all the money they ever had. Ella hasn't a cent."

"Is it so? Well, I'm off, Maurice. Good-by, old fellow. Can't tell when I may see you again."

The detective was now fully dressed, and, with hat in hand, had just grasped the knob of the door.

"Say, Sim, what do you think of the strange way, Al acted last night?"

"I'm sure I can't say. What's your idea of it now?"

"Well, of course, I know no more about it than you," replied Maurice, raising himself up on one elbow in bed; "but I was just thinking that Al had his banjo broken during the time he was away from us last night, and came back with the head all knocked in and the bass string gone; and we found just that very thing—the bass string of a banjo—in Ed Gaylord's hand."

"Good-morning, Maurice," said Sim Scudder, abruptly. With a sudden jerk he put the door between himself and his questioner, and hurried down the stairs.

"Maurice sees it, too," he muttered, as he passed into the street. "Poor Al—unhappy boy! Can he, in a moment of passion, have committed this terrible crime? I fear it is but too true. Heaven help him! If the bass string of his banjo indeed proves to be missing, I'm afraid he is doomed, in spite of all I can do to save him. If the boy is wise, he will escape while there is yet time."

He hurriedly turned his steps in the direction of Williamsburg. The Fifth street station was the place he sought. Here the policeman must have taken the chauffeur upon the previous night, and here he would learn all that the Brooklyn police had learned from questioning the man.

For the information of such of our readers as may be unfamiliar with the locality of the City of New York, we may as well explain right here the peculiarity of some of the local names. Lying to the east of New York, and divided from it only by the East River, a narrow arm of the sea, which connects the bay with Long Island Sound, is the city of Brooklyn, and included within its present limits are half a dozen towns—once independent municipalities—united under one governmental head.

These are Williamsburg, Greenpoint, Gowanus, Bushwick, Brownville, now actually included within the city limits, not to mention a dozen more that might as well be, so far as any break in the interminable streets and unending rows of houses of the City of Churches is concerned.

Between Williamsburg and Brooklyn there exists simply an imaginary line. It is called Division avenue, and when Division avenue is reached, Bedford avenue—the street upon which Sim Scudder now walked—comes to an abrupt end, spreading itself around a pretty fountain in the midst of a little square.

The police system of the entire city is, of course, one and the same. Hurrying past the fountain, the detective was soon at the Fifth street station. A police sergeant,

with whom he was personally acquainted, sat at the desk. "How are you, Randell?" he said, as he leaned familiarly against the rail which divided the space about the official desk from the outer world. "What about that murder case in the taxi upon Bedford avenue last night?"

"Upon my word, Scudder, you ought to know more about that than I do. We were expecting you this morning, though not quite so early as this."

"Well, here I am, and here are a couple of little articles which I may as well leave."

"The knife and the banjo string found in the dead man's hand—I should say so! Officer Jones was altogether out of order to let you have them at all."

To this Sim Scudder did not reply, but simply laid the knife with the deer's foot handle and a broken banjo string upon the sergeant's desk. Now, if Sergeant Randell of the Fifth street station had been observing, he might have noticed that this particular banjo string was a deal too short to have ever, in its present shape, been stretched upon any banjo made.

Had he been still more observing—sufficiently so to see through the stout cassimere of the detective's trousers, and into the bottom of his left-hand pocket—he might also have observed fully one-half of this very banjo string coiled up in a paper and reposing at ease.

It was the only clue to the actual murder of Edson Gaylord that existed, and in justice to his friendship for Al Constantine, Detective Scudder had determined to retain at least a portion of it, come what might.

As Sergeant Randell was a man of neither unusual acuteness nor possessed—as Sam Weller would have remarked—with optics of "double-hexta magnifying powers," he neither saw into the detective's little secret, nor observed the shortness of the string, but confined himself to calling Scudder's attention to the official records of the station, which contained a minute account of Chauffeur Barney McNulty's version of the affair.

It appeared that he had been hired by Edson Gaylord upon the public stand in New York, at Chatham Square, to drive him to his house in Bedford avenue, Brooklyn, at a little before twelve o'clock.

Gaylord was much intoxicated at the time—or, to use Mr. McNulty's own graphic words, "as full as a goat," and he had been somewhat doubtful about accepting him for a fare.

Once upon the Roosevelt street ferry, the young man, who had been very boisterous, had at length quieted down, and the driver, lighting a pipe, had left his seat at the wheel and gone forward to have a little smoke.

Upon reaching Williamsburg he had driven directly to the house on Bedford avenue, when, upon opening the door of his car, the body of the young man had been discovered weltering in his blood.

"Is that all?" asked Scudder, as the sergeant closed the record book. "Did this man drop no words which would tend to throw suspicion upon the author of this terrible crime?"

"Why, yes, Scudder, he did," answered the sergeant, somewhat uneasily. "He said to McNulty that his life had been threatened by a fellow named Al Constantine, a reporter on the *Sun*."

"Al Constantine?"

"Yes, and they tell me he's quite a friend of yours."

Sim Scudder moved uneasily, but made no reply.

"And what is more," repeated the sergeant, "he was with you last night, and was seen by the ferry-master at the gate on the Williamsburg side, coming off that very boat, the *Nevada*, with his clothes half torn off his back and a broken banjo in his hand. Perhaps that might explain the mystery of this broken string?"

"Randell," replied the detective, abruptly, "let me compliment you upon your promptness of action. The Brooklyn police are sharper than I thought. Is that all you know?"

"No. He fainted upon sight of the body of Edson Gaylord in the taxi-cab, and was assisted to rise by you."

"That is true. How did you learn it?"

"From Officer Jones. He knows this young Constantine by sight."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"Arrest him this morning—in fact, as soon as we have heard your side of the story. The house is shadowed now, front and rear."

"God help the boy!" muttered the detective. "It's all up with him, for a fact."

There was no chance to shirk his duty now, even had he been so inclined. In as few words as possible he related all that had occurred upon the previous night, adding that personally he believed in the young man's innocence, as a last effort to save his unhappy friend. It was all he could do.

"Perhaps so," answered the sergeant, shaking his head; "but you must admit the case has a bad look for him. I wish I could see it otherwise, but I can't."

"Shall you arrest him?"

"Yes, at once."

"Let me do it, sergeant. I shall esteem it as a favor. Poor boy! If he committed this crime it must have been in a moment of sudden passion. If you had seen how gay and light-hearted he was but a moment before, as we walked through Peck Slip, playing upon our banjos and singing, you'd agree with me in that."

"All right, Scudder, I wish you would. When will you do it?"

"Now—this moment. I'll engage to deliver Al Constantine to you at this desk in an hour's time. All I want to do is to make it as easy as I can for the boy."

(*To be continued*)

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CURRENT NEWS

TO PROTECT POKER GAME

In addition to a "kitty," a coterie of poker players in Cooper street, Atlanta, Ga., had employed two bulldogs for protection against the likelihood of a police raid. When the officers essayed a raid the bulldogs attacked them, keeping them interested until the gamblers escaped.

TREE FULL OF HONEY

A large tree was cut by Frank Harris at the foot of the Tuscarora Mountain, near his home, at Charleston, W. Va. It was a large hollow pine and was packed full of honey. The largest comb was nine and a half feet long. In some places it was four inches thick. The tree contained nine large pails of choice honey.

FARMER PLOWED UP WEALTH

A farmer named Palmer, near Nacona, Tex., a few days ago plowed up silver bars on his farm variously estimated to be worth from $100,000 to $280,000, it became known recently. Palmer says he will send the bars to the Denver Mint for analysis. It is believed the silver bars were left here by Spaniards in the sixteenth or seventeenth century when they retreated owing to the activity of the Indians against them.

RAT-EATING HOUSE SNAKES

In certain parts of Brazil rats are a great nuisance. The common cat does not thrive, for some unaccountable reason, but is replaced by a species of small boa-constrictor—the gibola. The snakes are not venomous. They sleep in the house, generally taking up their position at the foot of the stairs. When nightfall approaches they begin to wake up and during the night they glide swiftly about the premises, looking for rats. It is claimed that they are so easily domesticated that if moved from one house to another, they invariably return to the house whence they have been taken.

OSTRICH PULLS AN AUTOMOBILE

For the purpose of deciding a wager regarding the strength of an ostrich, a bird from a California ostrich farm was harnessed to an automobile to see if it was able to pull so heavy a load. About its neck and breast was placed an ingenious harness which was hitched to the axle of a medium-sized car. In the first trials the trainer, who rode on the back of the bird, kept a sack over its head, and the creature refused to pull. But when the sack was removed it strained at the harness and soon was pulling the automobile along the boulevard, up a slight grade. The bird did not stop until commanded.

SEEK GOLD IN PANAMA

Considerable interest is being shown in mining circles in the potential gold riches supposed to be possessed by the Isthmus of Panama, and stories brought by travelers of fabulously rich Spanish mines discovered during the days of the conquest are tempting many venturesome miners to make tours into the interior for the purpose of finding these deposits.

According to well informed persons on the history of Panama it is known that the Spanish conquerors sent millions of dollars of gold from the territory now known as the Republic of Panama. The Darian region, in particular, was known as a rich gold field from which the Spaniards extracted large quantities of wealth.

LIGHTING A FIRE AT THE TOP SAVES FUEL

Although a coal fire always burns better, especially at the start, when lighted from the bottom, it has been found to be much more economical of coal if the paper and kindling wood are placed above the coal, says *Popular Mechanics*. A few small coals and cinders are spread over the top of the kindling wood to enable a coal fire to be started. After the top layer begins to burn properly, the fire will spread slowly downward, if the air draft is right. This method secures the most complete combustion because the gases from the unburned coal at the bottom must pass through the burning layer at the top, and thus become completely burned. It is admittedly harder to build and control this kind of a fire, but the saving in fuel often justifies the extra trouble.

UNEARTHS OLD INDIAN TOWN

Prof. W. B. Nickerson, of Epworth, Ia., who has been making extensive excavations on the site of an old Indian village near Cambria, Minn., and in some Indian mounds in the vicinity, has just completed his work for the Minnesota Historical Society.

Prof. Nickerson found that the Indian village was situated on the bluff overlooking the Minnesota River valley some 500 years ago and has unearthed much pottery, weapons, household tools and bones.

He is of the opinion that the Mandan Indians may have inhabited the locality, which might account for many evidences of some degree of civilization, as these Indians were lighter in color than others and are believed to have had some white blood in their veins.

SEVEN MODERN WONDERS

A scientific society recently sent out communications to a list of a thousand scientists, selected from all the countries of the world, asking each to vote upon the seven wonders of the modern world. The reports, just made public, show that wireless telegraphy stands first. The telephone comes second. Radium was awarded a third place, but the aeroplane coming fourth, was only five votes behind it. The analysis of solar spectrum is reckoned the fifth wonder and the X-ray the sixth. The Panama Canal, which is more in keeping with the achievements formerly classed among the seven wonders, is placed last upon the list.

A large enough number of scientists regard anesthesia as a wonder to place it eighth upon the list. Only one man, a chemist of Munich, gave the seven in the order in which they are placed by the votes of the entire number.

THE PRAIRIE DOG

The prairie dog is a curious and entertaining little fellow. His color is a light reddish gray, the under side of the neck and belly being lighter than the other parts. The legs are short and the breast and shoulders wide. The ears, too, are short, as if they had been cropped; and the jaw is furnished with a pouch to contain feed, but this pouch is not so large as that of the common squirrel. The two inner toes of the prairie dog's forefeet are long, sharp, and well adapted to digging.

From the tip of his nose to the root of his shaggy little tail, the prairie dog measures about one foot, but his tail itself measures nearly four inches. While clumsy of form, the prairie dog is, nevertheless, most active and digs with great activity. Colonies of these creatures live in the ground, generally six or eight, and their holes are sometimes quite deep.

When at rest they sit upright on their haunches, seemingly with great confidence, marking with a fretful and harmless intrepidity at every intruder that may approach. The noise they make resembles that of a pet dog and is both shrill and sharp.

BEAVERS PLENTIFUL IN THE ADIRONDACKS

Beavers are becoming so plentiful in the Adirondacks that residents are urging the State Conservation Commission to permit an open season for their killing. They are said to be not only injuring handsome trees on private property, but to be destroying the beauty of many lakes by raising the water level and killing many trees along the water's edge. Beaver dams also have in many cases flooded low sections of highways and low-lying deer yards that have been in use for many years. They are also spreading into the Catskill Mountains and re-establishing themselves after an absence of more than a hundred years. No damage is reported yet from the Catskills, but the Adirondack is full of complaints about these industrious and valuable animals.

The increase of the beaver population increases the wild life of the Adirondacks generally, woodsmen there say. They build the dams that set back the water, storing it for the dry midsummer season, and help control the spring floods; provide better pools for trout to lurk in and make inaccessible any pools that fishermen can not reach and where game fish are given a better chance to multiply, permit breeding grounds for wild fowl in the backsets made by the dams, and in various other ways add and conserve the water of the wilderness.

WOMEN HUSTLERS

Arizona women are hustlers, if those who attend the clothing schools held in that State are typical examples. These clothing schools are conducted by the home demonstration agents, under the direction of the United States Department of Agriculture and the State College. The women who attend them are taught various phases of dressmaking and millinery. Such a school was recently held at Salmarita, Ariz. The waiting-room at the railway station was the only available place to meet. Before it could be used, the walls and floors needed a thorough scrubbing, and they were given it by the committee in charge. Three machines and two work-tables were installed, and twelve women came for instruction the first afternoon.

The amount of work accomplished during the entire week by those in attendance was a surprise to the home demonstration agent and the committee in charge. One woman in the three days she attended made a voile dress, a gingham dress, a skirt (from old material), a hat and a baby cap. While doing this she also minded the baby she had brought with her. When the youngster grew restless she ran her sewing machine with one foot and rolled the baby carriage back and forth with the other. All during her work, she sang a Dutch lullaby to the baby.

HOW THEY WROTE

Alexander Pope, who was the literary pontiff of his time, thought best when in bed. Whenever a thought came to him he would jot it down on a scrap of paper. His servant often found bedclothes and floor covered with white bits containing aphorisms which have now become hackneyed quotations. Victor Hugo wrote "Les Miserables" standing up, an attitude which Hawthorne assumed when he wrote many of his romances. One leg thrown over the arm of a chair or sitting on the arm of his secretary's chair, were Napoleon's favorite positions while dictating to Bourrienne, a position which he varied now and then by patting that scribe on the head or pulling his ears. Sir Walter Scott could, while reclining on a lounge, dictate to two amanuenses, who frequently had to stop writing, so funny the dictated passages seemed to them. Balzac, in a monk's robe, frequently wrote from midnight till noon, taking draughts of strong coffee when drowsiness attacked him, and thus shortening his life by many years, no doubt. William Morris made one of his famous translations from the Greek while riding on the steam cars. Walt Whitman and Horace Traubel, original in all things, were most original in the position they took while thinking. They were wont, Mr. Traubel says, to climb upon a pile of lumber and lie down upon their backs. In that way each found out what the other's best thoughts were.

NATURE CAUSED GIGANTIC EXPLOSION

The most notable volcanic explosion that occurred in historic times was when that old extinct volcano, Krakatoa, in the straits of Sunda, that had been sleeping for thousands of years was literally blown into the sky by the pressure of the pent-up gases beneath it.

This great eruption occurred in 1883. More than 60,000 persons were killed. The captain of a tramp steamer saw a very strange disturbance in the sea, in the direction of the old mountain. Taking his glass he saw a perfect Niagara of water pouring into an enormous fissure that had opened in the earth. He was struck with consternation, and rightly imagining that something very serious was likely soon to happen he put on all steam to escape, and luckily he had reached a point which enabled him to survive the effects of the awful blast when it came.

The vast mass of water which had tumbled into the bowels of the earth was immediately trapped by the closing of the great fissure down which it had poured. The water was quickly converted by the intense heat into a veritable high explosive, writes Hudson Maxim in his "Dynamite Stories," with the result that the massive mountain was literally blown bodily skyward, and fell in huge fragments into the surrounding sea. The shock was so great that it was felt through the earth, and an immense tidal wave was set going which encircled the earth. The opposing portions of the great wave, meeting in the lower Atlantic, flowed up even to the coast of France. An atmospheric wave passed around the earth three times. The amount of volcanic mud that was discharged from the mountain during the eruption was more than the muddy Mississippi discharges into the Gulf of Mexico in two hundred years.

CARE MAKES SHOES WEAR LONGER

It is possible to take such good care of your shoes that they will wear twice as long and look well to the last minute. *Popular Science Monthly* lays down the following rules:

In the first place, buy shoes that fit properly. Well-fitting shoes will always outlast shoes that are either too tight or too loose a fit.

Remember that patent leather shoes and light-weight footwear are not intended for hard service and consequently will not withstand rough wear. Be fair to your shoes and do not expect of them what they were never designed to give. All patent leather is likely to crack, and no guarantee against this is made by the manufacturers of shoes. When the shoes are wet be careful in drying them not to place them too near the fire, as they will dry out too quickly. This takes the life out of the leather and destroys its durability. Therefore, do not attempt to dry your shoes too quickly when they are damp. If your shoes are cleaned and dressed with proper dressing they will wear twice as long. To keep them soft and pliable there is nothing better than "neatsfoot' oil, which is inexpensive and can be bought at any leather or harness store. This oil is not a patent preparation, but is an oil that is used extensively by all harness makers to keep their goods in fine condition. Applications of this oil, say once a week, will keep the leather pliable and wear-resisting.

PEARLS OF HISTORY

The pearl is the only gem needing not the hand of man to bring to full perfection, and history affords ample evidence of the intense fascination it has always exercised among the people of every age. It is the oldest object of personal adornment.

Indian mythology often speaks of the pearl, attributing its discovery to the god Vishnu, who is said to have caused it to be drawn from the ocean for his daughter Pandala. The records of the Romans, Babylonians, Persians and Egyptians always make mention of it. There was the wife of the Emperor Caligula, who for an ordinary betrothal feast decked herself with pearls to the value of $1,650,000, and Julius Cæsar presented Servilla, the mother of Brutus, with a specimen valued at $250,000.

Coming to more recent epochs, we find that Philip II, King of Spain, paid $200,000 for a single pearl, known as "Peregrina." Found in Panama, it was pear-shaped, and weighed 134 carats. It was brought from India.

France, also, owns some exquisite examples. But the biggest pearl known is that which was once the property of the banker, Henry Philip Hope. Cylindrical in form, it is two inches long, four and a half inches in circumference at one end and three and a half inches at the other. It weighs 1,800 grains, and is valued at $60,000.

It is known that the beauty of the natural pearl sometimes proves evanescent. To retain its shimmering splendor, it needs air and light. Acids can affect them, and emanations from the skin can destroy the precious bloom.

SUCTION PLATES ON BATS

Certain bats appear to have found their hook like thumbs and hind feet insufficient for suspension and have made use of the suction principle for this purpose. This mode of suspension has been developed independently in two distinct bats, one a native of Brazil and the other of Madagascar. In the Brazilian species the suckers take the form of stalked discs attached to the palms of the thumbs and the soles of the feet. The suckers of the Malagasy species are horseshoe-like. By means of the suckers these bats are able to ascend vertical surfaces. Very curious it is to note the similarity between the suckers of these bats and those on the arms of the cuttlefishes.

The geckos which run up the walls and over the ceilings of houses in warm countries afford another instance of the sucker principle. Bats are not the only mammals which have availed themselves of the sucker. In the Malay Islands and the Philippines dwell large-eyed and slender-limbed little lemur-like creatures known as tarsiers, whose habits are nocturnal. In these weird little animals the tips of the toes are expanded into cushion-like discs, capable of acting as suckers, by means of which they ascend such smooth surfaces as the stems of bamboos.

Hoofed or ungulate animals, such as sheep, pigs, camels and elephants, have given up using their fore limbs in a handlike manner, and employ them solely for progession. Consequently tree climbing is out of their line. In Africa and Syria occur, however, certain representatives of the order known as rock rabbits, or hyrax, the Syrian species being the one referred to in the Bible as the coney (the old name of the rabbit). Certain African hyraxes have, however, taken to tree climbing, and the way they manage it is this: In each foot the sole is somewhat cup-shaped, and by the aid of muscular action the center can be more elevated, so that when the edges are applied to the bark the foot acts like a sucker.

NEW THINGS

An inventor has patented a metal binding for record books to protect them from fire and dust.

Ice tongs with a single handle have been invented that seize blocks of ice almost automatically.

Heretofore an importer of the metal in all forms, Japan has become an exporter of refined zinc.

A new oil-can has a flexible spout to reach places in machinery difficult of access without spilling.

Holland is the first foreign nation to adopt the new official cotton standards of the United States.

An inventor has patented wrist rests to be attached to typewriters to lessen the fatigue of typists.

The light of the sun exerts a pressure of 70,000 tons on the earth, according to a British scientist.

An electrically-driven machine wraps lump sugar in individual papers at a speed of 7,500 lumps an hour.

As a substitute for horsehair in upholstery the waste from cleaning Bahama sisal fiber is being used.

A new electrical primer for automobiles heats and vaporizes the fuel before it is drawn into the engine.

One set of copper mines in Cuba has been operated almost continuously and on an extensive scale since 1520.

British aviators have found that it is possible to use magnetic compasses by mounting them on horsehair cushions, which counteract the vibration of aeroplanes.

A patent has been issued for a garter for men in which the rubber portion, when worn out, can be easily replaced by a piece of elastic, procurable at almost any store.

Some of the world's finest carpets are made in Bugaria, where the government aids the industry by maintaining a technical school for the instruction of skilled weavers.

To leave a telephone user's hands free, the receiver of a new desk-set can be mounted in position for use on a rod attached to the transmitter and balanced by counterweights.

With a view to making Japan self-supporting in wool production, the government is planning to raise 1,000,000 head of sheep within the next twenty years.

ORIGIN OF THE DOLLAR

It was in 1792, just 127 years ago, that the Congress of the United States authorized the establishment of a mint in Philadelphia. With the founding of this institution the almighty dollar began to come into its own. The Spanish dollar had been common in America for years, and when Gouverneur Morris attempted to harmonize all the moneys of the States he took the dollar as a standard. Some sample dollars were exhibited in Congress. The plans of Morris were later proposed to strike four coins upon the basis of the Spanish milled dollar—a gold piece of the value of ten dollars, a dollar in silver, a tenth of a dollar in silver, and a hundredth of a dollar in copper.

While America borrowed the dollar from Spain, its origin was really German, the word "dollar" being the English form of the German "thaler." It was just four centuries ago—in 1519—that Count Schlick of Bohemia began to issue silver coins weighing an ounce each. These were minted at Joachimsthal, in Bohemia, and thus became known as Joachimsthaler, later shortened to thalers. In the sixteenth century, through trade with the Dutch, these coins became common in England, where they were known as "dalers" or "dollars." Shakespeare mentions "dollars" in the second scene of the first act of "Macbeth."

The dollar is now the standard value not only in the United States, Canada and Newfoundland, but in British Honduras, the Straits Settlements, Liberia, the Dominican republic and Colombia. The paper dollars of Colombia, however, are worth less than a cent each in gold, while the dollar of the Straits Settlements is worth about fifty-seven cents.

A TIGER HUNT IN CHINA

Considering that China has more than 300,000,000 inhabitants, it is quite natural for us to imagine it densely packed in every quarter. On the contrary, it contains vast stretches of forest and waste land, in which wild animals abound. Near Amoy is a rocky wilderness infested with tigers—one in particular of great size and ferocity.

One day four Americans and eight natives started out to exterminate this scourge, says the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. For several days they beat the ravines unsuccessfully, until they found a den in the rocks.

The natives, armed with spears and torches, explored the den, or cave, and announced that they had cornered the man-killer. So they collected bundles of brushwood and gradually closed up all the entrances save one and set fire to the brush. Then they invited the Americans to pitch in and kill the beast.

It was an exceedingly dangerous enterprise. The entrance was narrow, slippery and sloping, the hunters had to progress cautiously, and the natives, who were in advance with torches, could be depended upon to run away at the first alarm. Suddenly the big yellow head of the tiger loomed up from behind a rock about ten feet away, looking dazed at the glare of the torches. One of the Americans instantly fired. The tiger gave a terrible roar and scuffled away in the darkness.

The hunters waited patiently for half an hour, while the natives carefully explored, and at about the time they had made up their minds that he had escaped through some unknown passage, down came the tiger in the midst of the group. For two or three minutes there was a terrific scene of biting, clawing, roaring and shooting, and then all was quiet. Seven of the hunters, including two of the Americans, were more or less injured, but the tiger was done for.

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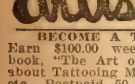

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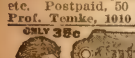

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You have tried different lotions, tonics, washes, etc., that were recommended or which you saw advertised. None of these have done you any good. They were not the right remedy for your hair.

Well, dear Madam, here is a message of good cheer. It comes from a man.

Years ago when I was almost entirely bald I came across an old Cherokee Indian who induced me to try his recipe for growing hair. He told me that the principle of this formula was used by all Indians, male and female, wherever they found a need of it.

You know that Indian women (and men too) have long, beautiful hair.

So I tried the recipe. The compound was an ointment for the scalp. It had a bad odor and was rather nasty. But my hair grew—and has continued to grow. Since then I have never had any trouble with my hair. At the age of 66 I now possess an abundant growth and visit the barber each month to have it cut. Once, after an accident, when I was compelled to remain in the hospital for several weeks, it grew so long that it was like a woman's flourishing hair growth.

The recipe I obtained from the old Indian savant and it has been used by many others. I have had the formula modernized by a practical chemist so that the pomade ointment now has a more pleasant odor and is more agreeable to apply to the scalp and base of the hair.

It contains no alcohol nor any of those ingredients which tend to dry the hair, scalp and roots. On the contrary, it is a fertilizing compound. The Indian principle is that it must contain elements from the three natural kingdoms. This rule is maintained in the recipe.

I want you to try this pomade on your scalp. It can be applied when retiring each night, only a few moments being required. It is likely you will find a very satisfactory result, almost from the outset.

Now make no mistake; this is not a lovely scented preparation. There's nothing fancy about it. The name is Kotalko and you shall have the recipe free of cost by writing for it. Your druggist can supply the pomade according to the recipe; or you may obtain the compound from me, ready to use. Send me your name and address. The recipe will come free. If you would like a proof box of the cosmetic, enclose 10 cents, silver or stamps. My address is: John Hart Brittain, BD-101, 150 East Thirty-second St., New York, N. Y.

BATHING GIRL

Photos that are real snappy. Artistic poses. Sample sheet, 29 miniature pictures and prices for large pictures will be sent for 10 cents.

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"EVERYTHING IN NOVELTIES"
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Just to advertise our famous Hawaiian imitation diamond—the finest the world has ever known. We will send absolutely free this 14k gold 7 ring, set with a 1-2k Hawaiian im. diamond—in beautiful ring box postage paid. Pay postmaster $1.25 C.O.D. charges to cover postage, boxing, advertising, handling, etc. If you can tell it from a real diamond return and money refunded. Only 10,000 given away. Send no money. Answer quick. Send size of finger.

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HEL-MET THE KAISER

Send one to your boy in camp; all the boys will want them. Anyone against the Kaiser or Germany should wear this pin. Same size as picture. Handsome metal, black letters. Will wear for years. Men and women wear them — causes laughter wherever seen.

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Learn to throw your voice into a TRUNK, under the bed, out in the hall or anywhere. Lots of FUN for the Teacher, Janitor, Policeman, Parents, Neighbors or Friends.

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is a little instrument that fits into the mouth out of sight. BOYS or GIRLS can use it. NEVER FAILS! A 32-page book on Ventriloquism sent with the VENTRILO for TEN Cents.

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Everyone who reads this book is wild over it. Contains the following:—The Kaiser's Dream, A Letter from the Devil to the Kaiser, Kaiser's Prayer, How Satan Resigns to the King of Devils, The Kaiser, etc. Many other stories, jokes, etc., about the German Emperor. Book mailed 10 cents, postage 2 cents extra.

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CHANGE A CENT INTO A DIME

Ask your friend to drop a dime in the barrel. When he takes it out, Behold! It is a CENT. You make 9 cents every time you fool them. Never fails. They cannot get on to it. Sample barrel, with directions, only.... 10c

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WILL STOP THE MOST VICIOUS DOG (OR MAN) WITHOUT PERMANENT INJURY.

BOYS Have great fun with the WIZARD PISTOL. For sniping dogs, cats, hooligans, slackers, lazybones—and for having a lot of fun with JOKES. The Wizard Pistol is harmless, although it certainly does puzzle and worry the one that is hit. We have seen one boy frighten away a whole crowd of rough-necks by using one of these Wizard Pistols. Price, postpaid, 60 cents; two for $1.00. Sent anywhere. Enclose stamps or cash.

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I want a letter from every man and woman in America afflicted with Rheumatism, Lumbago or Neuralgia, giving me their name and address, so I can send each one ***Free A One Dollar Bottle*** of my Rheumatic Remedy. I want to convince every Rheumatic sufferer at my expense that my Rheumatic Remedy does what thousands of so-called remedies have failed to accomplish—***ACTUALLY CURES RHEUMATISM.*** I know it does. I am sure of it and I want every Rheumatic sufferer to know it, and be sure of it, before giving me a penny profit. You cannot ***coax*** Rheumatism out through the feet or skin with plasters or cunning metal contrivances. You cannot ***tease*** it out with liniments, electricity or magnetism. You cannot ***imagine*** it out with mental science. ***You Must Drive It Out.*** It is in the blood and you must ***Go After It and Get It.*** This is just what Kuhn's Rheumatic Remedy does and that is why it cures Rheumatism. Rheumatism is Uric Acid and Uric Acid and Kuhn's Rheumatic Remedy cannot live together in the same blood. ***The Rheumatism has to go and it does go.*** My Remedy cures the sharp, shooting pains, the dull, aching muscles, the hot, throbbing, swollen limbs, and cramped, stiffened, useless joints, ***and cures them quickly.***

I CAN PROVE IT ALL TO YOU

If you will only let me do it. I will prove much in ***One Week,*** if you will only write and ask my Company to send you a dollar bottle ***FREE*** according to the following offer. I don't care what form of Rheumatism you have or how long you have had it.

I don't care what other remedies you have used. If you have not used mine you don't know what a ***real*** Rheumatic Remedy will do. ***Read offer below and write today.***

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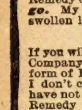

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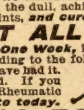

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Send Your Name and We'll Send You a Lachnite

DON'T send a penny. Just send your name and age. We'll send me a Lachnite mounted in a solid gold ring on 10 days' free trial." We will send it prepaid right to your home. When it comes merely deposit $4.75 with the postman and then wear the ring for 10 full days. If you, or if any of your friends can tell it from a diamond, send it back. But if you decide to buy it—send us $2.50 a month until $18.75 has been paid.

Write Today Send your name now. Tell us which of the solid gold rings illustrated above you wish (ladies' or man's). Be sure to send finger size.

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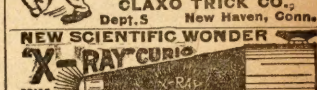

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If you have pimples which you have tried in vain to get rid of, I just want you to try something which is likely to amaze and delight you. In cases where persons have been disfigured by **ugly pimples** for years, this remedy, given me by an Indian from the North, has proved itself almost miraculous. It is enough for me to say that if you give me your name and address, enclosing four 3-cent stamps to pay for this notice and for mailing expense, I will send a proof treatment. Also as this Indian's remedy is wonderful **for curing boils,** send me the address of any sufferer, **please. James W. Greely, 306-A, Portland, Maine.**

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Send only 10 cents in cash or stamps and your waist measurement. Upon receipt we shall immediately send you a Genuine Sanden Electric Belt. In a few hours it will reach you by parcel post. If you like it pay the postman only $4.75, and a Belt of $10 value will be yours. Wear the Belt for 60 days, and if satisfied, recommend it to your friends. If not satisfied, return the Belt to us immediately and we shall return your money as soon as the Belt reaches us. If you suffer from debility, backache, rheumatism, dyspepsia, or any trouble due to a run-down system, this is an opportunity you should not miss. The Sanden Herculex Belt is the best in the world, and the offer we make is absolutely genuine. Uncle Sam will see that we carry it out and that you are protected.

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